THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

ENDURANCE TEST

OR

HOW CLEAR GRIT WON THE DAY

THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

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By Capt. Alan Douglas, Scout-master

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ENDURANCE TEST

OR

How Clear Grit Won the Day

COMPLETE ROSTER, WHEN THE PATROLS WERE FILLED, OF

THE HICKORY RIDGE TROOP OF BOY SCOUTS

MR. RODERIC GARRABRANT, Scout Master

THE WOLF PATROL

Elmer Chenowith, Patrol Leader, and also Assistant Scout Master

Mark Cummings
Ted (Theodore) Burgoyne
Toby (Tobias) Ellsworth Jones
"Lil Artha" (Arthur) Stansbury
Chatz (Charles) Maxfield
Phil (Philip) Dale
George Robbins

THE BEAVER PATROL

Matty (Matthew) Eggleston, Patrol Leader

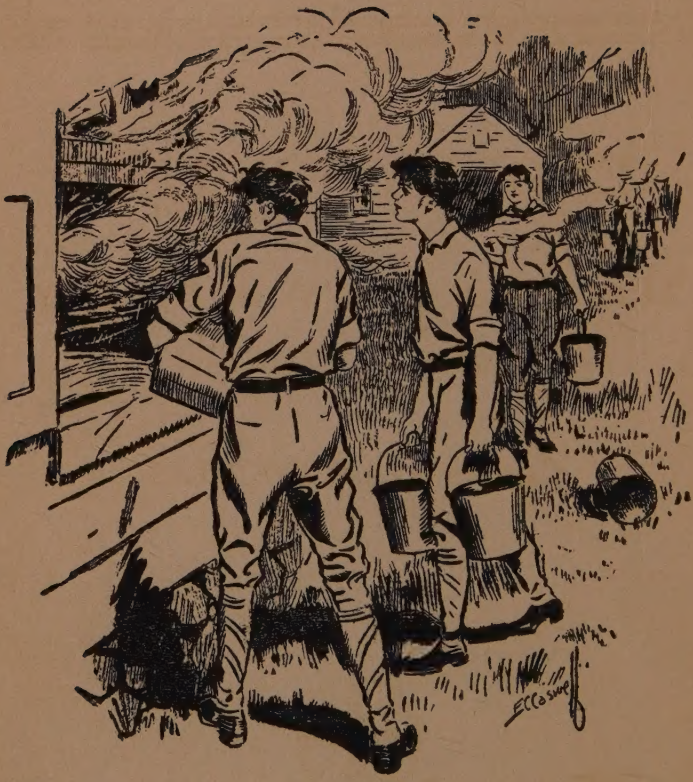
"Red" (Oscar) Huggins
Ty (Tyrus) Collins
Jasper Merriweather
Tom Cropsey
Larry (Lawrence) Billings
Hen (Henry) Condit
Landy (Philander) Smith

THE EAGLE PATROL

Jack Armitage, Patrol Leader

Nat (Nathan) Scott

(OTHERS TO BE ENLISTED UNTIL THIS PATROL HAS REACHED ITS LEGITIMATE NUMBER)



"We're gaining a little all the time, fellows!" exclaimed Elmer.

THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

ENDURANCE TEST

OR

How Clear Grit Won the Day

BY

Captain ALAN DOUGLAS
SCOUT MASTER

THE NEW YORK BOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK

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ENDURANCE TEST

OR

How Clear Grit Won the Day

THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUTS

ENDURANCE TEST;

OR,

HOW CLEAR GRIT WON THE DAY.

CHAPTER I.

SURPRISING LANDY.

"LET Adam Limburger have a try, fellows!"

"Yes, give the new tenderfoot scout a chance to show what he can do in the water."

"That's the ticket; just watch him take the high dive, will you, boys?"

"Mine gootness gracious, poys, oxcuse me, if you blease. If you dink I can dot blunge make vidoudt upsetting mineself, you haf anudder guess goming."

"Try it, Adam!"

"You've just got to, you know, old chap! Everybody's jumped but you; and all the while you've just sat there on the bank and watched us cutting up!"

"Shut your eyes, Adam, if you're timid, and then go; head or feet first, we don't care which, so long as you make a big splash."

"Ach, idt vould not pe sooch a surprises if Adam he preaks his neck; put, poys, if dot happens, somepody carry de news to mine mudder. Py chimineddy, here I go!"

"Get out of the way, Ty Collins, if you don't want to

get squashed; for here comes Adam down the shoot-the-shoot plunge!"

A number of lads were in swimming out in the country quite a number of miles away from the home town of Hickory Ridge. Besides the stout German who was standing in a hesitating way on the springboard that had been thrust out from the high bank, some ten feet above the water, there were Elmer Chenowith, Ty Collins, Landy Smith, and Ted Burgoyne, the latter of whom, though afflicted with a decided lisp, was looked upon with considerable respect among his fellows in the Boy Scout troop, because of his knowledge of medicine and the rudiments of surgery.

They had been splashing and having a splendid time for at least ten minutes after entering the water, when somebody happened to notice that the new recruit in the Hickory Ridge troop of Boy Scouts, Adam Litzburgh, a name that had been quickly corrupted into Limburger by the boys, did not seem to enter into the sport, but contented himself with either dipping his feet into the water, as if afraid, or else sitting ashore in the shade watching his new mates.

Adam seemed to be inclined toward stoutness, although hardly in the same class with Landy, who had long been bantered by his chums on account of his ever-increasing tendency to put on flesh in spite of all he could do.

"Look at the board bend, would you, fellows!" cried Ty Collins, as the German recruit stood there, balancing at the end, as though fearful of what the result would be should he jump.

"He's glued to it, that's what," said Landy, who was anxious to discover whether Adam would make a greater splash than he himself produced when he came down like a huge frog into the water of the Sweetwater River; for

this was not the familiar " swimming-hole " of the Hickory Ridge boys, but miles farther away from home.

Adam made several violent gestures as though he might be going to jump, and then shook his head vigorously in the negative.

" Noddings doing, poys! " he grinned.

" Hey, none of that crawfishing, now, Adam! " cried Ty. " You've just *got* to jump, once anyhow. We'll stand by and yank you out if you can't swim. Perhaps the boys over in your beloved Yarmany don't learn as early as Yankees do. Go on, now! "

" Want us to come up there and push you off, you Dutch cheese! " called Landy, in the hope of arousing the belligerent nature of the Teuton, and thus making him conquer his timidity.

" Vell, py shiminy crickets, off you dink you can scare Adam Litzburgh, poys, you haf anudder guess goming. Look oudt pelow! "

Elmer had been watching the antics of Adam with a critical eye. Before these last words were spoken he had turned to Ted, who chanced to be swimming near him, and remarked significantly:

" That fellow is pulling the wool over the eyes of Ty and Landy."

" Think tho? " asked Ted, quickly.

" Just watch and see, replied the other, who, besides being the leader of his patrol, known as the Wolf Patrol, was also the assistant scout master of the troop and authorized by certificate from the headquarters of the organization to assume the duties of Mr. Garrabrant whenever that gentleman was away on business.

Suddenly Adam gave a bound up and down until the springy board had taken on a motion superior to anything

that had been done by the others in their efforts to excel.

As it came up finally, the body of the German boy leaped into the air. Those who were watching with distended eyes saw him turn over twice before he struck the surface of the water, beneath which he shot with the grace of a fish.

Elmer gave a shout.

"I thought as much; Adam was hoodwinking you, boys!" he laughed.

"Wow, did you ever see the like of that! A double somersault before he struck, and then he dived under like a greenback frog from a log!" and Landy's fat face was a study as he looked his utter amazement.

"I take it all back!" shouted Ty. "They *do* know how to dive over in Yarmany and beat us all hollow. Say, fellows, I bet you Adam is going to prove to be the best water dog in all Hickory Ridge. Look at him swimming there, will you? I've seen an otter or a muskrat doing it that way, but never a boy. Ain't he the peach though! I take off my hat to Adam!"

"That'th what we all thay!" cried Ted, enthusiastically.

"Three cheers for our new comrade, fellows; here's to Adam, and may he prove as great a find as a true scout as he has a water duck!" exclaimed Elmer.

The cheers rang out, and were followed with a "tiger." Adam was coming back now, and his red face beamed with satisfaction. They had been inclined to look on him as a real greenhorn; and no doubt that was what he would prove to be with regard to most of the ways of woodcraft in which scouts desire to become proficient; but the boy from across the big water had certainly surprised his new mates this day by his expertness at diving and swimming.

So long as they remained in the water they kept Adam

busy showing off. He had a dozen clever tricks from the springboard; and there was no one in Hickory Ridge who, as Ty declared, could "hold a candle to him."

"No, nor in Fairfield, either," said Elmer, after he had seen what the German lad could do; "and if we ever have another series of rival tests with our friends over there, make up your minds, fellows, that Adam will stand in a class all his own."

Finally, when some of the boys began to show signs of blue lips, Elmer declared they had been in long enough. When one is not accustomed to being in the water at all hours, the vitality of the system is exhausted after a certain time; and those who are wise will make it a point to come out before they get to shivering, even on a hot September day, like the one that found these Hickory Ridge scouts in camp up on the Sweetwater.

A few of the boys, it seemed, had not had quite enough of outdoor life during the long vacation and they had induced Elmer to start out for three days more of camping, taking a tent along and a few things calculated to add to their comfort.

Adam, as the latest addition to the troop, asked permission to accompany them, and as he was something of a comical fellow they expected to have more or less fun at his expense as a greenhorn.

After this remarkable experience, however, some of them began to suspect that the shoe might frequently prove to be on the other foot; and that the German boy would turn the tables on them, even as he had done in the water test.

The tent was pitched close by, at a point selected by Elmer as the best to be found along that part of the river. The ground had the proper drainage in case of a heavy

storm and was not under any high tree, so that the danger from lightning was reduced to a minimum.

They had brought a few things along to eat; and as farms lay not far away, each day some of the scouts trailed over to one of these in order to purchase other articles, such as fresh milk, eggs, butter, and green corn, and on this morning Elmer had brought back a couple of fine chickens which a farmer had presented to him.

Of course, the rest of the boys understood that at some past time Elmer must have done the farmer a favor; for he was always eager to lend a helping hand when an occasion arose; but he declined to tell the story, and as they had the chickens the boys found no fault.

Elmer had made an oven in the ground, after the type used by hunters in many lands. A deep hole was scooped out, and a hot fire kept going for some hours; then the red ashes were removed, and the chickens, properly wrapped in big leaves, placed in the oven which was then hermetically sealed with clay.

This might be called the first "fireless cooker." It is the very principle upon which all those now on the market are constructed; and, indeed, the bottles that are guaranteed to keep their contents hot for twenty-four hours are fashioned on some similar lines for retaining the heat.

For six hours now had those spring roasters been in " hot storage," as Landy called it, and many were the appeals to Elmer to know if they would be ready by the time they had the corn and other things done.

The afternoon was wasting away. In another hour the sun would be setting. Elmer was busying himself at the fire with Ty, who claimed to be something of a cook and had proved this on various occasions. Ted was overhauling the little case of remedies, without which he seldom went

anywhere. Adam and Landy had taken a small camera, loaned by one of the other members of the troop, a tall scout known to his chums as "Lil Artha," and with this they expected to take a few snapshots of the camp, the picturesque river as seen in the afternoon glow, and such things as appeal to the average boy looking around for subjects on which to execute his skill as a photographer.

They could be heard rummaging among the bushes not far away, and Landy seemed to be getting more or less fun out of the German tenderfoot, who was utterly new to the ways of the American woods, however familiar he might be with any species of water.

Elmer had just made up his mind, after a sly investigation on his own account, that the chickens were deliciously done, and hence there need be no further delay about starting the balance of the dinner, when he heard Landy's rather whining voice approaching, and raised his head to watch.

When the two came into camp it was noticed that Adam seemed to be leading his companion, who was acting rather queer. At first Elmer wondered whether the fat boy could have been overcome by the heat, for his face was unusually red. Then he saw that Landy seemed anxious to dig his knuckles into his eyes.

"What's the matter, Landy?" asked Ty, whose attention had also been directed to the incoming pair.

"I declare if I know what to make of it, fellows," said the fat boy, as he stood there, trying to grin at them, though he certainly looked foolish, with his cheeks beginning to puff out and furiously red. "Just can't seem to see right. Feels like my eyes were going to close. And no wasp stung me, either; that is, as far as I know. It feels awful tough, I tell you now, and that's no joke."

Elmer bent forward to look closer.

Then his face assumed a serious expression.

"Well, I should say it wasn't a joke, Landy!" he exclaimed.

"But what's the matter with me, Elmer; tell a fellow, won't you?" pleaded the afflicted one.

"Why, you're poisoned, that's what!" declared Elmer.

Landy immediately let out a whoop; but although he was undoubtedly frightened, it seemed as though his face could not possibly turn white, as might have been expected under the circumstances.

"Me poisoned!" he exclaimed. "Oh, whatever do you mean, Elmer!" he cried, laying a puffy hand on the sleeve of the other's outing shirt, which he had rolled up above his elbow in order to have greater freedom in his movements.

"You've been foolish enough," Elmer went on with grave concern in his voice, "Landy, to handle that rank stuff, poison ivy, and then rubbed your hands all over your face. You've got a dose, all right, I'm afraid!"

CHAPTER II.

SIGNS OF TROUBLE AHEAD.

LANDY was certainly badly frightened. The grave manner in which the patrol leader said this with regard to the ivy poisoning seemed to add to his alarm. Some of the boys afterwards declared that his knees knocked together, but this the fat boy always indignantly denied.

Nevertheless it was with an almost plaintive expression that he proceeded to inquire further about his prospects.

"Poison ivy, you say, Elmer? Was that the stuff growing around that tree we rubbed up against? But Adam was in just as deep as I was; why don't his face burn and turn red like mine?" he asked, as though he considered it rank injustice that he should be picked out as a victim, when another, equally guilty, went scot-free from harm.

"That's the queer thing about poison ivy," replied Elmer. "While it's bound to act on most people, more or less, a few can handle it without any bad result."

"That's so," broke in Ty just then. "Why, I've known fellers that would begin to itch and burn if they even set eyes on the old stuff, and I reckon I'm liable to get a little turn myself; had one spell and they kept doctoring me for a week at home. Hand full of little water blisters, and I had to be mighty careful, for when they broke they poisoned wherever the fluid ran. Wow, hope I don't get it again, that's all!"

"Oh, my goodness gracious! What's going to become of me, then?" gasped poor Landy. "Because I've been

crazy enough to rub it all over my face. Me for the hospital, I guess!"

"Wait!"

It was Ted who said this, and somehow the very confident tone in which he spoke awakened a wild hope in the heart of the lad who was in trouble.

"Oh, Ted, can *you* do anything for me?" he asked, eagerly, transferring his attention from Elmer to the other, who had arisen after listening to all that had been said, and now approached the group.

"Let me look at you firtht," remarked the budding doctor of the troop, gravely.

He examined the face and hands of the boy closely.

"When did you rub up againth that vine?" he asked.

"Why," replied Landy, "just a little bit ago, when Adam was helping me get a snapshot of the camp. It was in the way and we pulled it off the tree. Fact is, I tripped over the old thing and got mad, so I yanked it loose, and Adam, he helped."

"Then let me tell you, in the firtht plathe, that I don't believe it'th poithon ivy at all, becauthe that doethn't begin to thow for theveral hourth," said Ted.

"Oh, bully for you, Ted; it makes me glad to hear you say that!" exclaimed the boy who was in trouble. "But mebbe you can tell if you see the old vine?"

"Courthe I can, and here'th Elmer who knowth all about it, too. Did it have jutht three leaveth to each thtem, do you remember?"

"Sure, I didn't pay any attention to the leaves, I was so anxious to drag the old thing away so as to get a better view," replied Landy.

Elmer beckoned to Adam, and the two hurried off. Everyone knew that they had gone to view the vine that

had been accused of doing so terrible a thing to the fat boy.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ted had picked up a little bag which he usually carried with a shoulder strap. Every fellow in the troop knew what that same bag contained; and indeed, many of them had found reason to bless the forethought that induced their chum to bring it along on every trip for emergencies such as the present. Ted delighted to call it his "vade mecum," and most of the scouts had only a hazy conception of what those words meant, though they appreciated the bag all right.

"If it wath really poithon ivy," went on Ted, "the firtht thing to be done would be to wath the thurfathe of the thkin with warm water, and then apply thith weak tholution of permanganate of potath. It'th about three per thent, and the color of wine, you thee. It'll dithcolor the thkin, of courthe, and for a while Landy can path for an Injun; but it doeth the work. Elmer put me in touch with the good it can do. He thayth every hunter of big game out in India and Africa alwayth carrieth thome along, to take out the poithon if he geth clawed by a tiger, a lion or any other carnivorouth beatht."

There was some hot water, fortunately, and in another minute the quick-witted camp doctor had bathed the face and hands of the patient with this, as warm as Landy could stand ith. Then he started to apply the contents of the small bottle, to the intense enjoyment of Ty who seemed to consider the whole thing in the light of a huge joke.

"Say, you'll be a beaut, Landy, and no mistake!" he chuckled.

"What's that matter, if it only does the business?" demanded the other.

"That'th common thenthe, anyhow," commented Ted, as

he continued to make sure that every inch of affected skin was liberally treated with the liquid, which, as he said before, was of a magenta color.

"There comes Elmer, and now we'll know," remarked Ty.

The other two came hurrying back to camp. Poor Landy, whose eyes were really looking half shut, turned a beseeching gaze upon the patrol leader.

"Was it poison ivy, Elmer?" he asked, anxiously.

"Not in a thousand years," came the hearty reply.

"Oh, that's almost too good to be true!" said Landy, with the tears standing in his eyes, for he had begun to fear that he was in for a horrible experience.

"What was it then?" asked Ty.

"I don't know," replied the other. "Some of your plants here are strange to me, and I reckon it's able to bring on a burning and a swelling sensation in a hurry, like lots of them are, with some people. But it can't be anything as bad as the real rhus tox. I've seen some serious cases of poisoning from ivy. And, Ted, I think you're doing the wise thing to use that potash solution."

"It can't do any harm," remarked the doctor, "and you thee, it'th bound to do thome good. Of courthe Landy will look like the dickenth for theveral dayth, but he'th a lucky boy if he geth off that eathy."

"Sure I am," affirmed the victim, readily. "Paint away all you like. Tell you what, fellers, she feels some better already. Perhaps, after all, I won't have to be led home with my face lookin' like a big punkin and my eyes out of sight."

"We may be happy yet," remarked Ty, who could be cheerful because it was not *his* face that burned and stung as though nettles had done their work. "And, Elmer,

would you mind if I once more turned my attention to getting grub ready? I've got a terrible vacuum down here, and you know we learned at school that Nature abhors a vacuum."

"I'll do more and help you get supper ready, Ty," replied the other. "We can leave Landy in the hands of Dr. Ted. He'll make him lie down and rest; and above all things keep his hands from his face. It's good he took hold of the case so quick, for the poison hasn't had much chance to get in."

So the work went on, two of the boys hovering over the fire that had been started, while Adam ran errands for Dr. Ted. Landy was given a blanket and told to keep quiet, but he insisted on lying so that he could watch the cooks out of the corners of his eyes, and every now and then he would sniff the air as though his appetite had not been entirely chased away by his misfortune.

When the coffee was done boiling, the Boston baked beans heated to a turn and everything ready, Elmer opened the odd oven in the ground.

"Why, they're nearly as hot as when we put 'em in!" declared the wondering Ty, as he unwrapped the two young chickens that had come from the friendly farmer.

Landy sat upright presently.

"Here, don't you dare to forget me!" he called out, as he saw the others about to sit down around the spot where the supper was spread.

"But sick people should never eat a bite," declared Ty, unable to resist the opportunity to tantalize the patient, whose one weakness lay in his enormous appetite, which he could never seem to control.

"I ain't sick, though," retorted the other, getting up with an effort.

"I always heard that it was the right thing to starve a fever, and stuff a cold," Ty went on, deliberately helping himself to a portion of a fowl, which almost fell to pieces in his hands, it was so tender and well done; "and I guess you've got the fever, all right. Anyhow, you're as red as a chief in the Buffalo Bill show."

"Oh, let up on that, Ty Collins!" cried Landy, indignantly. "Just give me half a chance, and I'll mighty soon show you who's sick around here. I can make them chickens look that way, I want you to know. Here, make room for me! Looks don't count in camp. Just think I'm sunburned, that's all. Elmer, help me to some of that delicious coffee, won't you? I've been smelling it this long time. It would go right to the spot, I believe."

"Sure I will, Landy," replied the other, smilingly; "and it does me good to know you're feeling so much better. But let's hope this will be a lesson to you never to handle vines that you don't know."

"It will, I promise you, Elmer," replied the other, earnestly. "And the first time you run across some of the genuine poison ivy just call me, please. I've heard so much about it that I want to know the stuff so I can beware."

"I saw some only a few hours back, and to-morrow I'm going to take you and Adam and Ty there to impress its looks on your minds. It may save you a heap of suffering if you expect to roam much in the woods after this."

Landy was feeling much better. Indeed, the swelling seemed to be going down rapidly, and even the burning, itching sensation had yielded to the application of that wonderful remedy.

Everybody, even Ty, felt glad of this, for Landy was a

jolly chum and they must miss him very much had he been compelled to be taken home in suffering.

"Hot work, this cooking in summer weather, fellows," observed Ty, as he looked up from cleaning off his tin platter.

"Then why don't you shed that terrible old red sweater?" suggested Elmer, though he knew beforehand that Ty would find lots of excuses for declining.

Winter and summer, Ty always wore that old flaming sweater when engaged in any outdoor game, whether it be skating, playing hockey, football, baseball, or even going fishing. The season seemed to make no difference to him, though some of his chums declared that the mere sight of the thing made them perspire.

"What, this!" he exclaimed, as though astonished that anyone should mention the subject. "Why, I just couldn't do a thing minus my jolly old sweater. It's been on all sorts of jobs with me. I look on it as my best friend. Nobody knows how many colds it's saved me from. I'd just feel lost without it on, that's what."

"But in hot weather like this it must make you swelter," continued Elmer.

"Not much it don't. Why, don't you know it *keeps the warmth out?* That's what I read once, and I believe in it, too. Besides, all the fellers have got so used to seeing me with it on that they'd pass me by if I dropped it," grinned Ty.

"That'th tho," remarked Ted.

No one suspected just then what an important part that same red sweater was to play in a game that might change Ty's mind, and that before many hours had passed.

The supper was pronounced prime, and a vote of thanks taken for the farmer who had once been a boy himself and

could appreciate the appetite of five fellows who were camping out.

A tent had been brought along, and into this the five crowded when the hour had grown late, and everyone admitted that he was "real sleepy."

Nothing out of the way happened during the night. There were no wild animals of any consequence around that part of the country, although farther north hunters got deer, and even a black bear had been shot the previous spring. Now and then a sly fox would create a little excitement among the neighboring farmers by slipping into their henroosts and carrying off a fat fowl. Mink might be found along the smaller tributaries to the Sweetwater; muskrats were plentiful in the marsh land, and some smart trappers made quite a little sum taking these small animals during the season.

Of course raccoons and possums abounded, as they always do around the smaller towns all through the middle East. Elmer, waking in the night and coming out to stretch his legs because the presence of five in a small tent cramped the quarters somewhat, amused himself for some time in listening to the various sounds that came from the woods close by.

To one not familiar with the voices of the forest folks, these might have passed as unmeaning noises, but he could place every one. In imagination he saw the bushy-tailed coon trying to scoop up a fish from the end of the log that ran down into the water; he could follow the movements of the fat possum climbing the tree to her nest in a hollow limb, and that angry snarling he understood came from a couple of slim mink who had met while patrolling the bank of a small creek on their nightly rounds.

Morning came at last, and as the boys emerged from the

tent, the first thing they did was to take a plunge in the river. Even Landy was on hand, looking very comical, it is true, with his stained hands and face, but feeling quite "chipper," as he declared, when Elmer asked concerning the state of his health.

They could all swim, of course, even Landy, who earlier in the season had been utterly ignorant concerning the first rudiments of how to keep afloat; but association with the other scouts in camp had caused him to take lessons, and Elmer had shown him how useful the knowledge of swimming may prove to any boy at some unexpected time.

"Whose turn to go for milk this morning?" asked Elmer, after they had dressed.

"I reckon it's mine," remarked Ty. "Some other fellow must start getting breakfast, then. Perhaps Adam may turn out as good a cook as he is a diver. Here, give me the directions how to take that short cut to the farmer's shack."

So, presently, Ty wandered off, carrying the tin pail for the milk. The getting of breakfast went on apace. Adam seemed willing to act as an assistant to Elmer, and between them they soon had things in an advanced stage.

"Thay, that Ty ought to be here with the lacteal fluid," remarked Ted, who often amused his chums by spouting big words.

"That's so," remarked Elmer, "and as Adam is busy here and poor old Landy recuperating from a bad attack of sunburn, I'll appoint you a committee of one to meander along the trail and hustle Ty up."

Ted hurried away, for he was beginning to feel the gnawing sensation of a hunger that always attacks growing boys soon after arising. Besides, that cold dip seemed to just give them all an additional zest.

Ten minutes later Landy jumped up in considerable excitement.

"Look there, fellers!" he exclaimed, pointing along the trail over which Ted had recently passed, "ain't that our chum Ted comin' back on the dead run and waving his hands like fun? Tell you what, something's just gone and happened to Ty! That's what he gets for making fun of me. P'raps he's run across a rattlesnake! You know that farmer said they killed one up here last year, and we did the same early this season. Oh, my, I hope not!"

CHAPTER III.

THE LURE OF THE RED FLAG.

"WHAT's the matter?" demanded Elmer, as Ted came reeling into camp, quite out of breath; but upon seeing that the other had a huge grin on his face he knew the news he was bringing could not be so very serious after all.

"Ty!" was all the runner could gasp at first.

"Yes, what about him?" Elmer exclaimed; while Landy laid a quivering hand on Ted's arm and inquired:

"'Taint a rattlesnake, I hope, this time, Ted?"

The other shook his head in the negative.

"Bull!" he articulated.

"Oh, he means that our poor pard has been chewed up by a bulldog!" cried Landy. "And Ty never did like dogs, either; only hot ones at the county fair."

"No, no!" whispered Ted. "Gentleman cow, you thee, and the motht thavage looking beatht ever. Wow!"

"A bull! Now I know what you mean," Landy went on, as the light of understanding broke over his mottled countenance. "Some of these farmers up here do keep terrors, and enter them in the exhibition for prizes. But what did the bull do to our poor chum Ty?"

"Don't know; didn't ask Ty," replied the other, now beginning to get his breath back again fairly well, so that his voice, lisp and all, was audible. "You thee, I wath jutht about to thaunter acroth a field, when I heard thome one yelling like the dickenth. Then I thaw a big red bull pawing the grath at the foot of a tree; and there wath

Ty, ath big ath life, thitting up on a limb. That'th all I thaw, for the bull tharted after me, and I got over the fenthe like fun.

The boys stared at each other; then a wide grin began to appear on their faces. Since it seemed as though their chum had not been seriously injured they could not resist the temptation to chuckle over the comical aspect of the adventure.

"Say, perhaps the bull just went and heaved Ty up in that tree," suggested Landy.

"Oh, I hardly think it went as far as that," said Elmer. "The chances are, Ty had plenty of warning, and climbed without any help from the beast."

"But why would the bull hang around all the time?" asked the fat boy, wonderingly. "Bulls don't feed on boys, do they?"

"Not very often," laughed Elmer. "But they do seem to hate a certain color above all things on this earth. You remember that the Spaniards use a red flag to make the bull attack in the ring?"

Then Landy saw a great light.

"Ty's famous old red sweater, that's what!" he shouted. "It's gone and pulled him into a peck of trouble, for a fact. And just last night he was blowing about what a great help it had been to him. Say, he must be in a nice pickle now, hey?"

"Breakfast will have to wait a while," declared Elmer; "while the whole bunch of us sally out to rescue our chum in distress. You know the rules of the organization. Come on, fellows."

Even while speaking, Elmer had placed the coffee pot and the frying pan aside, as far away from the fire as they could go without losing their heat. Adam, Landy and Ted

were apparently only too willing to accompany him on his errand of mercy.

Following a trail that led through the woods, they finally came to an open field. It had just one tree, and that growing some distance from the high rail fence.

"There's the bull, just as Ted said," remarked Elmer, as they looked.

"And he's about the ugliest critter I ever laid eyes on, for a fact," remarked Landy. "My goodness! Look at him tossing up the dirt with those nasty little black horns, would you! And he's punched holes through that tin pail the farmer's women folks loaned us, too. I can see Ty now, because of that nice red sweater he wears. He's waving at us, and there he shouts!"

"Hey, call him off, fellers! Somebody go and coax him around to that other end of the field. I want to come down. Been up here 'most an hour, I guess, and I'm getting tired of it. Elmer, you know how to do the business. Landy, s'pose you climb over and let him see you. He won't be able to resist trying for such a fat prize!"

"Listen to his nerve, boys," complained Landy. "He wants me to sacrifice myself on the altar of friendship for him. Just as if I could ever climb over this fence again, if that holy terror came snorting and rampaging for me! I guess not."

"No need to, Landy," laughed Elmer, as he noted the indignation of the fat boy. "We'll find some way to get Ty out of his fix without taking chances of your climbing a fence in one, two, three order."

"Hurry up!" came floating across the field from the tree, among the branches of which the owner of the red sweater was waving frantically.

"Firtht thing to be done, he ought to get out of that thweater, don't you think, Elmer?" inquired Ted.

"That's right, and I'll tell him so"; and, accordingly, raising his voice, he informed Ty that if he expected them to do anything toward effecting his rescue he must rid himself of the garment that was exciting the fighting spirit in the bull.

Of course that went against the grain of Ty; but when the others refused to make the first move until he had complied, he went about the task with evident ill humor.

"But he ain't leaving it hanging in the tree, Elmer," announced Landy, whose eyesight seemed to be all right this morning, however defective it may have been on the previous evening after his engagement with that poison vine. "He's stuffing it inside his shirt, I do declare!"

"Well, that doesn't matter," the patrol leader remarked; "so long as he gets rid of it. And now, boys, you stay here to help him over when he comes. I'm going to go around to the other side and tempt the bull. Fortunately I've got a red bandana handkerchief myself, which I wear cowboy style around my neck; and that ought to be a good enough bait for Mr. Bull."

"Oh, be careful, Elmer; don't stay in the field too long, because he might get you," pleaded Landy.

"You let Elmer alone," said Ted. "He knowth hith buthineth all right. He cometh from the ranch country, where they breed bullth. All right, Elmer; we'll get buthy when Ty getth here. Good luck to you!"

Elmer, when a little distance away, stopped to hold a short talk with the boy up in the tree. It happened that the border of the field varied, and this spot was a trifle closer than any other.

"Now, listen, Ty," he shouted, after he had succeeded

in attracting the attention of the other; "I'm going over to that spot that's farthest away. When the bull gets a good start for me, you slip down, and run for all you're worth straight to where the other fellows are waiting. Try and keep the trunk of the tree between you and the bull all you can. And if he chases you too hard, throw that red sweater aside. He may stop to toss it a few times, and that'll give you a chance to make the fence. Do you understand?"

"Yes, it's all clear enough; but hold his attention as long as you can, Elmer, because it looks like a whole mile over to that fence!" Ty called back.

So Elmer kept on around the field. The place he had selected as the scene of operations was exactly opposite where he had left the other three fellows; and he considered this a favorable circumstance, indeed, as it increased the chances of the boy in the tree.

When he had finally arrived, Elmer took the red bandana handkerchief from his neck, and climbed over the fence. Of course, not being a professional bullfighter, he did not mean to get far away from his base, and expected to make good use of that same fence when the crisis came.

Immediately he began to shout and wave that defiant banner, the bull took notice. Since the color that he detested so heartily seemed to have been transferred from the boy in the tree to the one on the ground, so the interest of the bull changed.

He instantly started on a mad run toward Elmer, galloping along in a way that seemed to indicate a desire to be out after business.

"Get down, quick, Ty, and run for all you're worth!" shouted Elmer, still waving his bandana, and at the same

time trying to correctly gauge the speed of his enemy, so that he could get out of harm's way in ample time.

"Jump, Elmer!" shrieked Landy, who was perched on the top of the fence across the field, and could not tell just how close the bull had arrived to his chum.

Ty had meanwhile dropped out of the tree, and was heading for them as fast as his nimble legs, aided by his fright, could carry him. But as he had said, it was quite some distance, and his heart seemed to be in his mouth every second of the time he was in transit.

"There! Elmer's made for the fence at last!" cried Landy. "Oh, look at that rush of the bull, would you! But Elmer was too quick for him, and he's over the fence and out. Oh, my, just hear that crash when the old bull banged into the fence! Now, will you be good, you monster? He's looking around, and I just hope he don't see poor old Ty making this way!"

"Py chimineddy! He's goming pack!" declared Adam.

"He is, and like a whirlwind, too!" gasped Landy. "Oh! now we won't be able to help our chum a little bit. Run faster, Ty; let out another kink! He's after you!",

Evidently there was no need to tell poor Ty that dismal fact, for he had been taking frequent observations over his left shoulder as he galloped along. Perhaps he did let out another "kink," as Landy expressed it; but if so, the fact was not very noticeable, so rapidly was the bull overtaking him.

But Ty had not forgotten that last instruction given him by the one who knew bulls from the ground up, their little weaknesses as well as their ferocious habits. The friendly fence, with his three anxious chums perched on the top rail, was not so very far away; but to his eyes it seemed

a long distance, and he just knew he could never make it before being overtaken.

In vain did Landy, Adam and Ted wave their arms, shouting at the top of their voices, in the hope of attracting the attention of the animal; or perhaps alarming him; he kept doggedly on, aiming straight for the fleeing boy, whose legs by this time seemed to wabble under him, possibly through sheer fright.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FINISH OF TY'S FAMOUS SWEATER.

EVERY one of the three scouts, waiting at the fence to assist Ty over, should he be fortunate enough to arrive ahead of the enraged bull, held his breath with suspense.

They could easily see that at the rate of progress made by their unfortunate chum, he must certainly be overtaken before he could arrive and have a chance to clamber over that high and stout rail fence, supposed to be bull proof.

But they failed to take into consideration the fact that Ty had profited more than a little from his connection with the scouts. And, besides, all through his exciting race with that owner of the wicked little black horns, he had kept in mind the last instructions shouted across the field by Elmer, the boy who had spent a part of his life on a cattle ranch and farm, and was supposed to know all about the habits of the animals.

"Oh, he's sure a goner!" gasped Landy, as they saw the rapidly advancing bull draw nearer and nearer the frantic runner. "Poor old Ty; I wonder will we be able to catch him on the fly!"

Landy was evidently thinking of baseball, though his excitement was so great that he hardly knew just what was passing through his mind.

"Look at that, will you?" burst from Ted.

Ty had waited until all hope of gaining the fence seemed to have fled. Over his shoulder he could see his terrible

enemy closing in and apparently putting on greater speed. If anything was to be done it must be accomplished without the loss of another second.

It was then that he suddenly drew something from the bosom of his outing shirt. This "something" proved to be that old red sweater which he had refused to leave in the crotch of the friendly tree, into the branches of which he had hurriedly climbed at the time he was first beset.

He waved the flaming garment wildly about his head in order to make sure that it caught the eye of the bull; and once that was done it might be put down as certain that the animal would see nothing else than that hated color.

"Wow! He's done it!" cried Landy, as his fat face was pressed tight against the rails of the fence, between which he had an uninterrupted view of the proceedings.

Ty had thrown the red sweater aside.

It floated to the ground as the slight breeze caught its extended folds, and must have presented quite an inviting picture to the inflamed orbs of the bull.

Would he stop short to pay attention to the object of his wrath, forgetting all about the boy who was fleeing toward safety? Elmer did not once doubt it. He knew that this was a familiar trick among the picadors in the arena during a Spanish bullfight; and one that seldom fails, if properly carried out.

Still, he held his breath with anxiety during that brief space of time; for if the trick did not succeed, Ty would very likely be in for an experience that must prove exceedingly painful, if not positively dangerous.

But the red sweater did not fail its owner. Long had Ty worn that same garment proudly, in spite of jeers and caustic comments on the part of his comrades. And if it

were fated to meet destruction at this time, at least it would serve a very useful purpose.

The animal saw the descending flag that incited his anger. Immediately he pulled up short, and began to gore the inoffensive article, thrusting his horns through it, while holding it down with his forefeet at the same time. In this way it was quickly rent into fragments, which the triumphant bull seemed to take great delight in tossing up into the air, as he bellowed with satisfaction.

And so the puffing Ty was enabled to reach the fence. Willing hands were extended to him, and with a rush he found himself drawn to safety.

"Hurrah!" cheered Landy. "You beat him to a frazzle, Ty! That was as clever a little trick as I ever heard tell of."

"All right," grunted the saved one, as he glared venomously between the rails of the fence; "but would you see what he's doing to my fine old sweater? That makes me feel sick. Two years now I've worn that, and she was sure good for another."

"But, man alive, think of what he would have done to you only for that sweater!" exclaimed the fat boy.

"Vat's de madder mit you, Ty?" demanded Adam, who looked at things without the least bit of sentiment; "you pet my life I vould pe gladder as anydings if I pe in your blace. Let der pull alone; he's enchoying himself. Shake vonce on dot narrow escape. Py chimineddy! Mine heart it vas yump in my throat yust as you throw dot sweater avay!"

But Ty refused to be consoled. The sight of the animal running around as if looking for him, with a sad portion of the beloved sweater fastened to one of his ugly little horns, made him grit his teeth.

"Huh!" he said, disdainfully. "You fellers just think it's fine because you never did appreciate that beautiful old sweater; but if you think you're going to get free from seeing me look like myself, you've got another guess coming, that's what. Say, d'ye think I'm going to let an old one-eyed bull knock me out of wearing what I fancy? If I feel like it I'll put on six red coats."

"Hath he got only one eye, Ty?" asked Ted, eagerly.

"That's a fact, boys; didn't I see it glaring up at me time and again, when the sly old critter'd pretend to be eating grass, and hoping I'd come down," Ty answered, promptly enough.

"Then jutht think what might have happened to you, my thon, if the old bull had happened to potheth *two* eyeth," remarked Ted, soberly.

Ty would not even smile, he was so angry at the sacrifice of his garment. Climbing up on the topmost rail of the fence, he shook his fist at the prancing bull, and even shouted all sorts of things at him.

"That don't wind it up, not by a long sight!" he declared. "I know where I can get a better sweater than that old one, and for three dollars, too. I've got that and more in my bank at home; and the very first thing I do when I get back will be to bust that same bank open and go down to Selfridge's department store. Oh, have all the fun you want with it, you one-eyed beast; but some day perhaps I'll get even with you!"

"Better forget all that, Ty," remarked Elmer, coming up at this moment. "You had ought to be so tickled over making such a narrow escape that you'd never bother your head over the loss of that worn-out old thing."

"Worn-out nothing," declared the aroused Ty. "I could have had good use out of that sweater this fall, in

football. But never mind; I know just what I'm going to do about it."

"Nothing foolish, I hope," observed the patrol leader, as he cast an apprehensive glance toward the bull.

"Buy that other red sweater that's hung in the window of our big store this month and more. Perhaps, after all, I may not be so sorry, because it's much brighter than that old one; and some of the boys will let out a howl when they first see me in it."

Ty actually allowed a grin to appear on his face at the thought of this; which would apparently indicate that his anger was not so very deep after all.

"Anyhow," continued Elmer, "I want to tell you, Ty, old fellow, that you did that little trick as fine as silk!"

"D'ye think so, Elmer?" remarked the other, looking pleased; for what boy does not like the appreciation of his fellows?

"You certainly did. I've seen cowboys go through with that act many a time, but never any better than you did it," Elmer went on to say. "The only thing I was afraid of was, you might throw it in such a doubled-up way that it would not catch the eye of the bull. But you shook it out all right; and once he saw it he could look at nothing else after that."

"Say, I did that on purpose, sure I did, Elmer," declared Ty, eagerly. "Seemed to me that it was the proper caper to try. And she worked all right, too. But look here, fellows, he put his horns through that blessed old tin milk pail the farmer's women folks loaned us. She's a wreck; and anyhow we couldn't get in there by the tree to pick it up. What's to be done about it, tell me that?"

"Oh, there's only one thing to be done," laughed Elmer, taking out half a dollar and thrusting it into the

hand of Ty. "We've just got to pay for the lost pail and borrow another one. That's part of the funds we raised before starting out. Are you still going to get that milk, Ty?"

"Am I? Say, twenty bulls couldn't stop me, once I start on a thing. Milk we want for our breakfast, and milk we're going to have, you mark me," said Ty, stubbornly.

"Shake on that!" laughed Landy.

"Oxcuse me, off you blease," spoke up Adam with a sly grin; "put is dot vat you galls a milk-shake?"

Elmer laughed, and at the same time looked suspiciously at the German; for somehow he was fast coming to the conclusion that Adam might be smarter than his stolid appearance indicated. In fact, he believed that the German often put on an air of extreme innocence when in fact he was enjoying a sly little joke.

"He'll bear watching," was what Elmer said to himself, as he heard the other laughing uproariously at his own humor, while squeezing the hands of his new chums.

"But, Ty," the patrol leader remarked, with a twinkle in his own eye, "you've learned one thing, I think."

"Sure. Always to see that there's a tree in a field before trying to cross over," said the other, quickly.

"Well, that's a good motto, I suppose," remarked Elmer; "but that wasn't what I meant. You know now that many times the longest way around is the shortest way to the fire. After this you'll think twice before taking a short cut."

"I'll squint around for anything in the shape of a bull, anyway," chuckled Ty.

The animal had succeeded in demolishing the offensive garment by this time, and as if to show his utter contempt

for the whole bunch of boys, he started to crop the short, sweet grass where he happened to be standing. Whenever he came upon a tattered fragment of the illy treated sweater, he would give it a toss, utter a defiant bellow, paw the ground a little, and then calmly resume his feeding.

But doubtless all the while he was watching the boys beyond the fence out of a corner of his eye. Elmer knew that this must be so, for he noticed that the animal always kept his head turned toward them.

"He vas as mad as some hornets," remarked Adam, who seemed to be particularly interested in the actions of the bull, for he kept peering through the fence. "Aber I haf a red sweater I vould see if he likes to yump at me. Oxcuse me, Elmer, put let me haf de loan off dis."

He deftly took the bandana handkerchief from the hands of the patrol leader, as Elmer was about to fasten it once more around his own neck; for he had used it to attract the attention of the bull, it may be remembered, when at the other side of the field; and events had followed so rapidly since, that he had not found a chance to replace the handkerchief where it belonged.

"Hold on, no foolish business, Adam!" cried Elmer, clutching a leg of the German as he started to mount the fence.

"Nein! I haf no vish to get me a grafeyard in kevick," Adam declared. "Only I vould like to see if dot pad egg oudt in der field vould run at me like he dood at Ty. You pet my life I vill not yump *inside* de fence; and dot's no choke, Elmer."

Accordingly, Elmer released his clutch, and the stout German climbed nimbly to the top of the fence. Here he

began to wave the handkerchief in the most brazen manner, at the same time calling out defiantly at the animal.

At first the bull refused to listen, but kept on grazing; though doubtless the sight of the hated color was working upon him.

"See him edging this way, would you, the sly old sinner!" called Landy.

"He's getting ready for a rush," remarked Elmer.

"Look out, Adam; be ready to drop off there!" cried Landy.

"And be thure not to take the wrong thide, or you'll be in for it!" admonished Ted, a little nervously.

Suddenly the beast threw off the mask, so to speak. He made a plunge, and was immediately in motion, coming with lowered head on the full run, and heading for the spot where Adam stood on the fence flaunting that flag of defiance.

"He's off!" yelled Landy. "Jump, Adam, before he knocks you into the field! Oh, ain't he just the limit, though; and as mad as they make 'em! Jump, why don't you? Elmer make him come down! Perhaps he's got his foot caught, and can't drop out!"

CHAPTER V.

A DOUBLE-ACTION JOKE.

"JUMP, Adam!" called Elmer.

The German had waited as long as he dared, and as if the voice of the patrol leader gave him the sign, he suddenly made a backward spring, turned a somersault in the air, just as he had done from the springboard when swimming, and landed squarely on his feet.

Crash!

That was the bull striking head-on against the fence. And it was fortunate for the other boys, as well as Adam, perhaps, that the owner of the bull had made that fence additionally strong. Had it given way before the onslaught of the animal the chances were Elmer and his mates would have had to do some lively running to get clear.

But the fence held, though it wabbled suspiciously, and Elmer felt sure that a few more such blows must have demolished the barrier completely.

"Don't you wish you could, old fellow!" taunted Landy, after he had made sure of the fact that the animal was going to be held back.

The bull looked through the fence, snorted, pawed the earth, and let out an angry bellow. Then he walked disdainfully away, as though satisfied with the victory he had gained, that one fragment of the torn red sweater still floating from his horn, just for all the world, as Ty remarked, "like a flag at half mast."

"Come, let's hike back to camp, boys," remarked Elmer,

moving off, " and finish getting our breakfast ready. By the time Ty manages to come along we'll be fixed for business."

" Oh, I'll show up in decent shape, all right," remarked the other. " This time I'll take no rash chances in crossing fields. Around the fence is good enough for me, I guess."

He was as prompt as his word, and came along with his pail of fresh milk just as Elmer was beating the tattoo on the frying pan that summoned the party to breakfast.

" What did they say up at the farmer's, Ty? " asked Landy.

" Not guilty," replied the other, who was cramming his mouth with a portion of the flapjacks Elmer had made, and which were really fine.

" Now, what's the use of giving us puzzles to solve? " complained the fat boy, as he speared his second helping from the tin platter, and proceeded to deluge the same with some maple syrup that had been brought along in a bottle. " Not guilty of what, say? "

" That ain't their bull, you see," remarked Ty.

" And tho they declined to buy you a new thweater, ith that it, Ty? " asked Ted, a little maliciously.

" Oh, rats! " cried the other; " you know right well I'm not built that way, Ted Burgoyne. Never once thought of trying to make anybody pay for my foolishness in trying to cut across a field that had a bull in it. I only mentioned the fact because, you see, I had to explain what happened to their tin bucket, when I was paying for it. But after all they wouldn't accept the money—said it was only an old pail after all, and the farmer he told me I ought to be glad it was the bull, and not me, that kicked the bucket."

" Bully for the farmer! " said Landy, or at least that was what the others took it for granted he meant, since his

mouth was so full of flapjack that he could hardly do more than mutter.

After breakfast was over they started to carry out the various duties or pleasures which each fellow had in view. One wanted to take a few pictures, and, of course, this was Landy, though his mates solemnly warned him to be careful what vines he touched while in the woods. Another declared he felt like trying to tempt some of the finny denizens of the river from their beds on this bright morning. This was Adam, and he had brought along a lot of new tackle, as well as a fine jointed rod, to prove that he was as good a fisherman as he was a water dog.

Elmer chose to potter around the camp. There were always plenty of things that could be done to improve conditions and add to the general comfort of those who occupied the tent and cooked at the fireplace made of stones. And having the true sportsman spirit in his composition, he was never more happy than when arranging these many little details connected with the camp.

He improved the fireplace so that the coffee pot would not tilt and threaten to upset from the three metal crossbars that formed a gridiron; he dug the drain at the back of the tent a little deeper, so that in case of a sudden heavy downpour the surplus water would be carried off and not inundate the tent, and, finally, he finished the rude but effective table on which they could place their food at meal times, and even had a couple of short sections of log rolled up so as to take the place of seats when they dined.

Ty, after the breakfast things had been washed up and put away, wandered off somewhere. And Ted was supposed to be fishing farther down the stream, he, too, having expressed a wish for a real fish dinner that night, if so be the bass in the Sweetwater were in a "taking" humor.

Several times when Elmer stood up to rest the muscles of his back, and consider what he would do next, he happened to cast a curious look up to where Adam had taken his position on the bank of the river.

Apparently the fish did not respond to the urgent invitations of the German boy as well as he had expected, or else Adam's education with regard to the ways the American black bass has to be attracted to the bait had been neglected.

For some time he was industriously seen threshing the water as though issuing a call to all the fish in the river to come and have a bite with him. Of course that was just the opposite of what he should have done; for bass are shy and have to be tempted in quietness.

Elmer chuckled to himself when first he noticed what the new scout was doing.

"Looks like Adam is densely ignorant along our ways of fishing," he thought. "Wonder now what kind of fish he's ever caught that style on the other side of the ocean. Perhaps he never wet a line before in all his life. I noticed that he watched Ted closely, and imitated him exactly in setting up his line, even to the float Ted always persists in using."

The third time Elmer looked it was perhaps an hour after Adam had started fishing, and he saw that a change had come over the manner of the young Teuton. He was no longer casting out again and again with a great splashing of the water. On the contrary, he sat astride the tree trunk that jutted out some eight feet above the water. His line ran downstream and the float could be seen bobbing in the midst of the little bubbles that marked an eddy below.

Elmer watched him closely for five minutes, and not

once in all that time did he see the other move in the least.

"Well, I declare, I believe the fellow's gone to sleep!" he laughed. "I reckon Adam isn't used to camping out, and on that account he's had poor rest these two nights. And that hot sun is enough to make any fellow feel drowsy, too. Whew, what if he nodded too hard and just dropped off there! Perhaps I'd better go and wake him up. And while I'm about it I can just give him a few pointers as to how he'll have at least a decent chance to coax a few bass to his bait."

Filled with this feeling of comradery toward the new recruit, whom he was fast learning to like because of his constant good-nature and really witty remarks, Elmer started away from the camp.

It just chanced that instead of heading directly for Adam, he walked first of all out to the river bank. Looking downstream he could just see Ted busily engaged in landing a fish that seemed to be fighting hard, and this told that the bass were "on the feed," if only one knew how to attract them.

The idea of that sleepy Adam dozing there and letting the golden harvest time slip by unheeded made Elmer laugh again. He even allowed himself to imagine that it would just about pay Adam right if he crept up and gave his line a sudden tug, to make him think he had a bite.

Just then something moving attracted his attention. It was directly below the boy who sat astraddle of the projecting log, and a little farther downstream.

Ty, why of course it was that party, though minus his distinguishing red sweater, which was now, alas, no more. But what under the sun was he doing there? As near as

Elmer could see he appeared to be industriously attaching some bulky object to the end of a line!

All at once what seemed to be the truth burst upon the patrol leader. Ty had also noticed the sleeping Dutchman, and was bent upon having a little joke at the expense of Adam. Yes, he had managed to draw the line of the fisherman in, by the aid of a long stick that had a crotch at the end, and was now fastening a bunch of hemlock browse, done up to represent a big fish, to the end of the same.

When all was ready and the current pulled strongly at the bulky object, possibly the additional strain might arouse Adam, who would immediately think he had hooked a monster bass, and doubtless the ensuing excitement would tickle the joker to the top of his bent.

And if Adam did not wake up himself, it would be easy for Ty to creep under the projecting log until he could reach out and give the line a jerk.

So Elmer concluded that he might as well wait and see the fun. Being a boy himself, he liked anything that partook of clean sport, so long as the joke did not border along the cruel or mean stage.

Now Ty had dropped his artificial fish back into the river. The swift current that ran farther out did not seize upon it at once, for there was an eddy and a rather deep pool at the spot Adam had selected for his fishing. Consequently the pull upon the line did not seem to come up to the expectations of the joker.

Ty crouched there waiting for results.

The minutes passed and all remained peaceful and serene. Adam seemed to be enjoying a lovely sleep. His head was upon his chest and his whole figure appeared to be in a relaxed state.

Twice did Ty rise up to stare at the boy who sat there

straddling that log, as though he wondered why Adam did not arouse to the occasion. Plainly, the practical joker would have had his labor for his pains unless something was done to start things moving.

The third time Ty seemed to come to this conclusion himself, for instead of merely observing the sleeping fisherman he started to advance toward him.

At this point the bank of the river was hollowed out somewhat. There was just about enough footing below for an agile boy to clamber along and keep from being precipitated into the water.

Elmer chuckled quietly.

"It's coming," he said to himself, as he prepared to see more or less excitement around that region. "Looks like Adam might be due to a little surprise party."

Ty had finally managed to crawl far enough along the narrow ledge. He was apparently directly below the log that stuck out from the bank above him. Elmer judged this by the way the other craned his neck in order to look up.

"Now he's got his chance, if he can only reach that dangling line!" he thought.

Apparently Ty realized the same thing, for he was seen to be extending that same crotched stick that had before proven so useful.

In this fashion he speedily drew the line in toward him, gently, so as not to arouse the fisherman before he was ready to give him a good hard shock.

"Pull up the curtain, the stage is all ready!" Elmer said to himself, as he kept close watch on the movements of the boy below.

He could see Ty taking a firm grip on the dangling line as though he meant to have it no halfway affair.

"Now, go!" exclaimed the watcher.

Just as though Ty might have been waiting for some such order, he was seen to suddenly tighten his hold, and then give a tremendous jerk, that was surely calculated to make Adam believe the champion bass of the Sweetwater had taken his bait and gorged it.

Then something happened, something that doubtless the practical joker crouching below had not anticipated as a result of his prank.

Adam seemed to suddenly awaken. He was evidently greatly excited, and as he made a wild clutch at the butt of his rod, which had been partly jerked out of his grasp by the violence of that bite, he just naturally lost his seat on the log.

Elmer saw him gracefully slide around the trunk of the fallen tree and go down with arms and legs sprawled out like an immense frog. And, strange to say, as he dropped his extended arms seemed to suddenly clasp Ty in their embrace, for both of them went headlong into the river with a tremendous splash!

CHAPTER VI.

STRANGE SOUNDS FROM THE WATER.

"ADAM did that on purpose!" was what Elmer exclaimed, as he saw how the arms of the falling German boy pulled Ty with him into the pool under the log.

That great splash was surely enough to frighten away any bass that might even have had the hardihood to remain around, after the vigorous threshing of the water by the greenhorn fisherman.

Of course the two boys immediately came to the surface. Ty was spouting water like a young whale; but Adam seemed to be all right. He made a few strokes after his original fashion, that had so aroused the admiration of Landy, and arriving at the bank, climbed up.

Ty made a great deal more fuss as he churned his way to the shore; and Elmer, who had hastened up so as to witness what followed, could see that there was a look of wonder, almost awe, on the face of the practical joker. The results had been so sudden, and so disastrous to himself, that he could hardly understand just what had happened.

"Ach! put dot vas sooch a surprises to me, Ty," remarked Adam, from the shore; "I dinks me I haf ketch de biggest fish in der river; undt ven I throw oudt mine arms to pull him in, py chinks, it vas only you, having some fun py me. How goes it, londsman; I hopes you enchoy yourself mooch. Subbose you go pack, undt get my fishing pole, vich is floating down der stream."

He gave Ty a push as the other tried to clamber out on the bank and forced him in again. The other showed signs of fight until Elmer, sizing up the situation, called out:

"That's only fair, Ty; you made him lose his rod, as well as take a ducking with his clothes on. Get the rod again, and let him pull in his fish."

Possibly Ty realized the justice of this claim; or it might be he felt disposed to take his medicine gracefully, for with a laugh he swam out again, as well as he was able with his garments clinging to his limbs, secured the rod, which had partly sunk, and came back with it in one hand.

As if to prove that he harbored no animosity, Adam frankly stretched out his hand and helped Ty ashore. There they stood, dripping wet, and laughing at each other.

"Oxcuse me, Ty," said the German lad, making a queer face; "put I haf to laugh, it is so funny! You dinks to make me some droubles, and by shiminy you fall indo de same hole yourself. So, dere is two of us!"

"The joke is on Ty," announced Elmer. "I saw the whole thing, and I want Adam to own up right now that he had one eye open all the while, and was watching what was going on."

Adam looked up at him with a leer on his square face; then he shut one eye and deliberately winked at Elmer.

"I subbose dot I vas nodt so much asleep as somepody pelieves," he said; and that was the only confession they could get out of him.

Fortunately, as the weather was so very warm, there was no danger of either of the boys taking cold after their

ducking. Neither of them would bother changing their garments, or attempting to dry those they had on.

"Let 'em dry on me," said Ty, whose good-nature had returned, though he declared that everything had conspired to upset all his calculations that morning; what with the obstinate bull, and now the clumsy Dutchman who had to throw out his arm and pull him into the river along with himself.

Ted had come up from his fishing place below to ask what all the row was about.

"Fact ith, you have buthted up the fithing for thith morning," he declared, with some show of indignation. "If you mutht kick up a racket, why under the thun don't you go off by yourthelf and do it. I got theven fith, and one of 'em a beaut. And the biggetht of the bunch wath jutht going to take hold when you had to make all that beathtly row."

When, however, the thing was explained to him, Ted enjoyed the joke as well as Elmer had. He declared that he would wander along down the river to another promising hole he remembered seeing. And Elmer, thinking that the German boy might as well begin taking some lessons in bass fishing, agreed to accompany Adam upstream a little distance, to try for a capture.

"Hey, that was just the greatest thing ever!" called out a voice; and Landy was seen approaching from above, waving his little kodak in glee.

"What's all this talk about?" demanded Ty.

"I got it, that's what!" the fat boy kept on saying. "And won't it just be a corker, though!"

Elmer jumped to conclusions at this remark.

"Do you mean you saw the tumble Adam and Ty took?" he asked.

"Well," Landy went on, "you see, I had just discovered Adam sitting there asleep on that log sticking out over the water; and I thought what a lovely subject he would make for a picture. So I crept up till I had a good focus, and then I pressed the button!"

"Yes, go on; that wasn't all you did, was it?" asked the patrol leader, who was able to read the open-faced Landy like the page of a book.

"Well, you see, it was such a fine subject that I thought I had ought to knock off another view, so that if one proved poor the other might be good. And just as I was all ready, why, it happened!"

"And you snapped it off as they were falling in?" Elmer continued.

"I think I did," said Landy, eagerly; "for my finger just pressed the trigger unconsciously. I was that astonished, you see. And I'm going to develop this roll to-night. Wouldn't it be just immense if it turned out to be a good picture!"

"Oh, yes; something to amuse the rest of the troop, and chase the blues away," grunted Ty, as he hunched his shoulders and sauntered back to the camp to ascertain what Elmer might have been doing there.

Elmer did take Adam up the river a piece, and finding a promising spot where there seemed to be a likelihood of bass frequenting, he proceeded to instruct the other in the rudiments of the art.

Adam took to it from the very first. He was frank enough to confess that he had never done any fishing in the old country, and was therefore utterly green; but he showed an aptitude for catching on to what Elmer told him; and before they had been an hour at work he had

not only succeeded in hooking a fine specimen of the gamey bass, but played and landed him in great style.

"You'll do, I reckon, now, Adam; so I'll leave you here and go back to camp. Be sure you come in when you hear the signal, which will be three loud cooies."

At noon, when the fishermen gave it up for the day, as the heat stopped all biting on the part of the bass, it was found that while Ted had caught seven fair-sized fish, five of them bass, one a large perch, and a sucker that was the largest Elmer had ever seen around that region, Adam had brought in two bass and a big catfish.

"Py shiminy crickets, dot feller vas dry some foolishness py me," he said, as he held up the still wriggling catfish; I haf drouples to get him off der hook; and he sthick me dwice so hardt in der finger. Ooch! put it do feel sore yet somedimes. I dink me he preak off some dot thorn in der pone."

"That's another lesson you must learn, Adam," said Elmer. "The catfish has ugly spines that hurt like fun when you run your hand against them. I guess they're poisoned, like the tail of the stingy-ray, down South. I've known a fellow who had a running sore for a month after being stuck by the fin of a cat. And, Ted, seems to me here's another chance to use that colored stuff that was so fine with Landy."

"Right-o, Elmer," exclaimed the other, making a dive for the tent to look up his medicine bag.

So Adam grinned, and allowed the "doctor" to paint his hand in the region where the spines of the catfish had penetrated with such painful results. Indeed, he declared an hour later that the pain had all departed; and Elmer concluded from this that permanganate of potash was good to use on all sorts of poison wounds.

"I believe," he went on to say, "that if I was struck on the arm by a rattler, I'd cut the wound open some, suck all the poison I could out, providing I had no scratch or sore about my mouth, and then take my chances, after painting it freely with the strongest solution of this potash I could bear. Yes, and I think I'd come out much better than those who believe in soaking the patient with whisky."

The afternoon they spent in resting up. Indeed, it was unusually hot, and somehow none of them aspired to exert themselves any more than they could help.

Adam had offered to clean the fish, after he had been shown how, and made quite a good job of it, being very particular, after the fashion of his kind. And Elmer gave Ty the duty of seeing that the fish were served that evening at supper. It would be a poor piece of business if they put several days in up there on the old Sweetwater, famous for its bass fishing, and never once enjoy a mess of the delicious dish.

They waited later than usual that evening, hoping the air would cool off some with the setting of the sun. It was almost dark when Ty got started with the supper. When the fish began to fry in the pan (in which the cook had first tried out several slices of salt pork, which grease was made very hot before the bass, dipped in cracker-dust, were placed in the pan), some of the boys, who had declared they had no appetite, were observed to sit up and take notice as they sniffed the fragrant odors that arose.

"Guess you-all will come around when things are ready," laughed Ty, who often liked to mock the Southern scout, Chatz Maxfield, when he talked.

"Well, I confeth I'm waking up," admitted Ted, frankly.

"And that stuff smells mighty good, Ty," declared Landy. "I want you to remember now that it wasn't me said I couldn't eat a bite."

"I thould thay not," laughed Ted. "Nobody would ever believe you guilty of thuch a thilly thing. You're alwayth hungry, Landy, and ready to gobble."

"Say, now, that's what I call mean," expostulated the fat boy, pretending to be very indignant, though these attacks on his character were of daily, almost hourly occurrence, and he was quite accustomed to meeting them. "Just because I'm big, and need more to keep me up than the rest of you, some fellows like to say I'm greedy. 'Tain't so. And some day I'll run you a match, Ty, to see who can keep from eating a bite the longest."

"Not much, you will," declared the cook. "Why, it wouldn't be a square deal. You've got all your fat to fall back on; and look at me, skin and bones."

So they laughed and talked, as the preparations for supper went on apace.

"What're you listening to, Elmer?" asked Landy, after some time had passed; and looking toward the patrol leader he saw that he had his head raised in an attitude that told of suddenly aroused interest.

"I thought I heard a queer plunk just then, out there on the river," replied the other. "Yes, there it went again. Did you hear it, boys?"

"Sure we did," replied Ty, raising his head from his duties at the cooking fire, in between the stones that had been fashioned somewhat after the shape of a V, with the evening air fanning the broad end.

"Whatever can it be, Elmer?" demanded Landy, his face immediately expressing curiosity, and, perhaps, a trace

of alarm; for anything that savored of mystery always excited the fat boy.

All of them were now interested, and listened to ascertain whether that strange sound was repeated. Perhaps an interval of half a minute passed. Then once more came that plain "plunk!"

"Sounds like somebody drowning, and givin' the last gasp!" declared Ty.

"Oh, let up on that thort of thuff, Ty," said Ted. "You're alwayth thinking about thuch nathty thingth."

Landy turned appealingly to the patrol leader. He realized that if anybody ought to know what the character of those queer sounds was, Elmer must.

"What is it, Elmer?" he asked again. "The sea serpent or only some old grand-daddy bullfrog croaking to himself on a log. Say, perhaps that's one of them funny old loon birds you were telling us about to-day, that can just laugh so's to make your flesh creep! Tell us about that, Elmer. Whatever is it? There, that time it was a double plunkety-plunk! Now, I wonder what in the dickens it means!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEWS THAT GEORGE BROUGHT.

ELMER laughed.

"Listen," he said, "and you'll hear some more of the same kind."

Hardly had he ceased speaking than there was another loud "chug" heard.

"My, he jumped into the water that time, sure, if it *was* a frog!" said Landy.

Then came a strange rattling sound, as of half a dozen "plunks" all mixed up.

"He threw a handful then for a change, and good measure," remarked Elmer, dryly.

"A handful of what?" echoed Ty.

"Stones!" replied the patrol leader.

The others stared at each other.

"Is *that* what it is, then?" asked Landy, heaving a distinct sigh of relief. "Why, of course, we all ought to have got on to it before now. Stones always make that kind of plunk when they drop into the water from above. But, Elmer, whoever d'ye think it can be; and what's he trying to do—scare us?"

"Oh, that remains to be seen. Suppose you fellows go on getting supper ready, while I slip out quietly and investigate," Elmer proposed.

"Don't take too many chances, remember, Elmer," cautioned Ty, as he turned again to his frying pan, filled with fish.

"Yeth, go thlow, Elmer," said Ted, shaking his head. "You know there'th a bad lot of fellowth over in Fairfield, alwayth ready to play trickth on travelerth. It may be they only want to coax one of our crowd out, and then carry him off. Take a club along with you, Elmer."

"Yes, do," Landy added, thrusting a stout stick into the hand of the patrol leader. "And use it if you have to. Remember, one call of the wolf will bring us along in a rush, Elmer. And I'm going to have some other nice clubs handy, in a minute or two."

"Don't go to any trouble, because you may be disappointed," chuckled Elmer, as he pushed back into the shadows, so that he could enter the tent.

Having done this, two minutes later he was crawling out from under the canvas at the back of the tent, having unfastened the same by uprooting the peg at that particular spot.

Of course it was easy enough for Elmer to creep away undetected by anyone who might be in a position to watch the camp. His experience on the plains of the new country up beyond the Saskatchewan River in Canada, where his father had been in charge of a relative's ranch and farm, was of considerable benefit to him now.

Once free from the light of the fire, Elmer stopped to listen and made up his mind concerning certain things. Then he again pushed forward.

He was now making something in the shape of a half circuit. If he kept on long enough he would presently bring up on the river bank below the camp; and this was in reality his destination; for he believed that the unknown party who was tossing those stones out into the river, with the intention of mystifying them, must be stationed somewhere there.

In fact, Elmer had remembered that just here the shore made a sort of little beach, which they could have used nicely as a landing place, had they possessed a boat. And he had also noted the fact that there was a great abundance of round stones there, very tempting to the average boy, who loves to hurl such things into the water, just to see them splash.

He was drawing near this particular spot now, and in order to avoid being seen, as his figure would be outlined against the sky, he dropped down on his hands and knees, crawling forward the last ten feet after this Indian fashion.

The darkness was not intense, and Elmer had a pair of unusually keen eyes. Hence, as he stopped there just above the little beach, he was able to make out a figure that seemed to be bent over as if searching for something.

"He's hunting another relay of stones," thought Elmer, wondering who the party could be.

There was a slight possibility that it might turn out to be some wandering hobo, who thought he might cause the boys to temporarily abandon that fine supper, which he could snatch up and make away with. Then, again, there was a chance of this fellow being only one of a number of the Fairfield roughs, who, having discovered their camp, were bound to do all they could to make trouble.

But Elmer did not take much stock in either of these theories. He was inclined to look upon the unknown as a friend, one of the fellows from Hickory Ridge, who had come out to join them for the last day of their stay on the Sweetwater.

That was why he listened so keenly, for he hoped to catch some familiar sound calculated to tell the identity of the dusky figure below.

The drone of voices from around the fire came to his

ears, telling that his four chums had taken his advice, and were acting as though they had no particular interest in those queer noises.

Now the figure below seemed to straighten up, and Elmer knew he meant to throw another stone, perhaps a second volley that would rattle like shot as they came down on the surface of the running water.

And as he heaved them forth, the party below gave vent to a peculiar little grunt or wheeze that was very familiar to the ears of Elmer Chenowith.

"Hello, there, George! Having a great time, I see, amusing yourself!" he said, in a low, but plainly heard tone.

There was a moment of silence, as though the unknown was somewhat taken aback by the fact of his having been caught so neatly, even in the act.

"That you, Elmer?" he asked, with a short laugh.

"That's who it is, George," the other replied. "Suppose you come up out of that, now, and surrender. There's a penalty attached to this thing of trying to scare us. Do you know what you've got to do now to make good?"

"No, what's that, Elmer?" asked the boy, who was climbing up the bank by now, and who happened to be a cousin to Landy Smith, known among his mates as "Doubting George," simply because he could not help appearing skeptical about nearly everything that came along.

"Why," observed Elmer, very seriously, "you've just got to unfasten your belt, sit down alongside us, and do your level best to get away with a share of the fine fish supper the boys have ready."

"Oh, ginger! Count me in on that, won't you?" laughed the other, as he accepted the extended hand of the patrol leader, and was assisted up the bank. "It's a

long walk up here, and you see, since you fellows hiked it, I just didn't dare use my wheel. And I tell you I'm hungry enough to eat anything halfway decent."

"Well, Ty's chief cook and bottle-washer to-night; and you know enough about him to understand what that means. Ty's long suite is his cooking. He's just the boss at that, every day," and Elmer purposely elevated his voice as he said this, so that those by the fire, now awaiting them, could overhear what he said.

"Hey! what's all that you're saying; and who're you talking to, Elmer?" demanded the party in question.

Landy gave a shout.

"By the great horn spoon, if it ain't my cousin George!" he exclaimed. "Ten to one he doubted whether we had really come up here at all—that he didn't believe he could ever find us—that he expected to frighten the whole bunch out of their seven senses by that silly trick; and even now he isn't sure whether he sees us or is dreaming he does. In fact, George can find a loophole to doubt anything."

"All right, say what you want," replied the newcomer, sturdily. "I admit that I was born with an unfortunate disposition to question everything. Mother says I must be a great lawyer some day. But there are some things that are so plain even Doubting George can't miss hitting 'em. That smell, now, is sure the finest thing that ever came down the pike; and, anyhow, I don't doubt but that you fellows are going to ask me to share in the grub with you. How's that, Cousin Philander?"

"Oh, you're welcome to it," replied Ty, in place of Landy. "Plenty for all; and we owe this treat to the patience of Ted and Adam here. Later on you must get

our new scout to tell you how he goes in after his fish, clothes and all. It's a real funny stunt, George."

"Yeth," put in Ted. "And mind you, he pullth in other fellowth with him. Be thure to have him tell you that part, my thon. It'th worth hearing, George."

Of course, around the fire, as they discussed the qualities of the fish, the story was told. Everyone seemed to have a share in the telling, so that George got it from several sources.

"And pretty soon," declared Landy, "I'm going to use a black pocket in the woods close by as my dark room, so I can develop that roll of films. You see, I'm just wild to learn whether I really did push that trigger on the camera, and shoot it off, just as those two fellows were tumbling into the water. If I got that, it'll pay me for the whole job of hiking away up here and losing more'n a pound in weight."

"Wish you luck, then, Philander," said George, who usually made a mouthful of his cousin's name.

Some people said George was really envious of Landy's possessing such an uncommon name; others believed that he was proud of being connected with a family that could sport such a classical "cognomen," as he often termed it.

"When did you leave good old Hickory Ridge?" asked Ty; for, like most boys, no sooner was Ty away from home than everything about the place assumed an almost sacred aspect, and he could never even mention its name without an affectionate prefix of some sort.

"I reckon I've been three hours on the way," was George's reply.

"Three hours to get up here! Say, you didn't walk like that in the big hike, when you covered the name of Robbins with imperishable glory," Landy declared.

"Shucks, and me the lowest score in the whole bunch!" sneered George. "But I guess I lost the way, and covered a lot more territory than I ought to have done."

"Yes," said Landy, "I know what was the matter. You just made up your mind every signpost lied, and when it said go east, you tried the other road. That's what you get for doubting everything. It brings heaps of trouble, and if you're wise you'll shunt that on to the side track in a hurry."

"Oh, shucks! Attend to your own mutton, Landy," said George; but his face had reddened at the accusation of his cousin, and none of the others doubted but that Landy's random shot had hit pretty close to the truth.

"Anything new around Hickory Ridge since we left there?" asked Elmer.

"Why, yes, there is, fellows," replied George, brightening up, as though he had just thought of something.

"Then tell us what it is. Has Hiram Juggles got a new shingle on his barn; or did the Mosely twins get mixed up again, so that nobody knows which is Jim and which Jack?" asked Ty.

"Oh, it's something more serious than that, let me tell you," George went on, with a vein of mystery in his voice that instantly aroused the curiosity of Landy.

"Then why don't you tell us what it is, George, you old ice wagon!" he exclaimed. "Somebody give him a push, please, and get him to roll his hoop."

"They tried to wreck the midnight express—guess you fellows started off too early in the mornin' to hear about it," George said.

"We never heard a word, so hurry up and tell us, George," said Elmer.

"Yes, whatever in the wide world would they want to

wreck that train for? Was it some crazy man; or do they think it could have been an attempt to rob the express safe?" demanded Ty, anxiously; for he had an uncle who held the throttle of the engine pulling that particular train, and was therefore deeply interested.

"Nobody's dead sure what they wanted to do," George went on, "but the messenger admits that he was carrying a bigger amount of money than usual. Perhaps the hoboes got wind of it, and thought they might have a chance to capture the stuff. They didn't have nerve enough to hold the train up in western fashion, so they tried the coward play."

"I notice that you say hoboes did it, as if nobody doubted that part of the affair," Elmer remarked, significantly.

"They were seen by a track walker, and had quite a fight with him," George continued. "The poor chap is in the hospital now, though he's going to pull through. He managed to crawl to a station and give the alarm, so no damage was done. And now they're hunting high and low for two hoboes, one short with red hair, and t'other a long-legged fellow who limps when he walks, like he'd once had his leg hurt. They are called Shorty and Lanky Jim!"

It was Adam who set up a shout that caused the others to stare at him.

"Hey, what's this mean?" demanded Ty. "He looks like he knew something about the two rascals you were telling us about, George. Elmer, you take him in hand, won't you, and see what he's got on his mind. And make him tell it in plain United States. We left our Dutch dictionaries at home this trip, you see."

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE TWINKLING STARS.

Supper was forgotten for the time being, under the influence of this new source of excitement. But then the young campers had taken the edge off their sharp appetites before now, so that it did not matter very much.

Adam was grinning as he found himself the one object upon which all eyes were focused. It would be hard to find the boy who does not enjoy standing in the lime light, even for a little while.

"How about this, Adam," said Elmer, "do you know anything about these two men?"

"So," drawled the German boy, "aber I am nodt sure. Dey looks to pe sooch; put mebbe I haf anudder guess goming, poys."

"Tell us where you think you saw them," the assistant scout master continued.

"At Prady's," answered Adam, promptly.

"Brady's—why, that's where we get our milk," spoke up Landy.

"Sure it is," declared Ty. "That's funny now; I never remember setting eyes on anybody answering that description; and I've been over there twice."

"Yeth," declared Ted, "and I can thay the thame thing."

"You think you can; but you're away off, Ted," grinned Ty, who never grew weary of nagging the other on that lisp, with which he was afflicted.

"When did you see them, Adam?" asked Elmer, paying no attention to any of these side remarks.

"Vy, berhaps you may remember, Elmer, dot dis very evening I vant to go py der voods vonce, und get dot milk. Vat ve haf, it did get sour by der heat, und Ty he say he haf a desire to dake der tramp again nix. So I volunteer py der game. You pet me I nefer dry to gross dot field py der pull. I dake der long vay, und pring der milk safely home. Iss it not so, Ty?"

"Well, we're drinking some of it in our coffee this meal, so that goes without saying," the other replied.

"Tell us about the men—where were they when you saw them, Adam?" Elmer went on.

"Py der parn," returned the German scout.

"Not prowling around like a couple of thieves, Adam?"

"Nodt as I can see."

"Then what were they doing?" the patrol leader asked, impatiently; for it was a most difficult thing to draw the story out of the German, who seemed to want to be "pumped" step by step, as Landy termed it.

"Vorking," came the short reply.

"Oh, then you mean they were apparently in the employ of Mr. Brady?"

"Dot iss so. Dey toss der hay oop to him py der stack, und he stow it avay."

"I believe the farmer is getting in a late crop of clover hay," remarked Elmer.

"Yes," broke in Ty, "and he was telling me this very morning when I got the milk, after my little adventure with that neighbor's bull, how his man had left him in the lurch, and everybody around was so busy he hardly knew just how he could get the big crop of hay that was stacked in the field, ready for the mow."

Elmer nodded his head as though, after gaining this knowledge, it was comparatively easy to put two and two together.

"That settles it," he remarked. "These two hoboes came along, and he offered them such big wages to help him over his trouble, that they just couldn't resist. But I know something about tramps, and the real article wouldn't work at any price."

"Gee! Perhaps they had some other object in taking the place?" Landy suggested.

"Just what I had in mind," Elmer followed. "If they are the rascals who tried to throw that train off the track for some awful reason, they must know that there'll be a hunt through the country for them; and, perhaps, they hope to hide as farm laborers until the thing wears off."

"Then we ought to warn Mr. Brady, hadn't we?" asked Ted.

"Yes, but at the same time we must be careful not to excite the suspicion of those fellows," Elmer replied; and then turning again to Adam, he continued: "Did you have anything to say to either of the men, Adam?"

"Vell," replied the other, slowly and reflectively, "I dink me dot berhaps von off dem might dell me der vay to der milk house, und so I stop me to ask."

"Yes, you asked one of them—which one, Adam?"

"I notice me dot as I gome close dey look at me like I vos a pad egg, und put der heads togedder in a punch. So I yust chuck oudt mine preast und valk right up to der spot, like I vas say: 'Vat's der matter mit you; I am Adam Litzburgh, und I pelong to der scouts; put dot in your pipe und smoke it!'"

"But you didn't say all that; you just asked one of

them where the milk house might be; wasn't that it, Adam?" Elmer went on.

"Der short von idt vas; und he turn to der udder und he say it pe all right, nuttings to bother apout from dot Dutch fool. Den, py chinks, he call oudt to der farmer who vas on der top of dot haymow, und ask vere der milk house pe."

"And that was all, was it, Adam?"

"I knows me nuddings else," replied the German boy; "only ven I gomes me along again, der short von vaves his hand to me, und laughs him some py my pack."

Elmer really sighed with relief when he realized that he had actually succeeded in getting the whole story out of the uncommunicative fellow. It was like "drawing teeth," as Landy more than once remarked.

"You've heard the story, fellows," he said, turning to the others; "what had we better do about it? I want everybody to have a voice in this, and majority rules. So don't be bashful, but speak up."

"Well," remarked Landy, slowly. "I suppose we ought to give Mr. Brady a hint of the truth; but, as you say, Elmer, we must be mighty careful how we do it. Those tramps must be a pretty desperate pair, and they'd think nothing of sailing in to clean us out if they suspected we were on to their curves."

"How about you, Ted?" asked Elmer.

"Oh, count me in the thame lay," replied the one addressed. "Nobody knowth when they're entertaining angelth unawareth, like the good book thayth; or bad men either. The farmerth want help tho bad at timeth that they don't athk too many quethtionth when they get a thanthe to employ a huthky man. We'll drop around there in the morning thome time, when they're out in the haying field,

and give the women folkth a little hint that they'd better get rid of the new handth."

"Ty?"

"Them's my sentiments. No special need of any hurry, I guess," replied Ty, who was really feeling the effect of his unusual exercise of that morning when the unfriendly bull gave him such a lively chase, and who wanted to keep quiet in camp.

"George?"

"Wow! You just couldn't get me to stir away from here to-night unless you tied a pair of mules to me and started them going," replied the newcomer, as he slyly helped himself to more fish.

"And Adam?"

"I dinks me as how it pe werry comfortaples here," grinned the German, duplicating the act of George, as though he feared lest he might not get his full share of the supper.

"Hey, let me in on that, will you, fellers?" cried Landy, spearing another portion from the rapidly vanishing pile. "And if you want to know my sentiments, Elmer, just put them down as 'he also ran.' Because I'm willing to do whatever the rest of you say."

Elmer himself looked a trifle disappointed. He had been thinking that perhaps they ought to warn Mr. Brady that night; for it could not be a very safe thing to have two such desperate men in his employ longer than was absolutely necessary.

Still, he had said that he would be bound by what the majority of his chums decided was best; and he could not change his ideas.

After all, the chances seemed to be that if the two new farm hands were actually Shorty and Lanky Jim,

their sole object in taking service with Mr. Brady must be to lie low until the excitement died away. Consequently, they would be very careful not to do anything that would turn attention upon them; and in that case a little delay could not matter.

"All right, then," said Elmer; "it's settled that after breakfast to-morrow we'll make up a party to go after milk and find a chance to warn the Brady people. Of course the women folks will be scared nearly to death; but they'll find some way of sending word to town in these days of telephones. And then the officers will come out to arrest the fellows. Pass my dish, please, Landy, and get a small help of the fish. I'm mighty fond of it in camp, and never care for a bite at home. And this is as good as they make fried fish, thanks to Ty's way of cooking."

The balance of the supper was eaten amid a lively lot of talk. Of course much of this concerned the events of the day; the adventure with the bull; the trick Ty attempted to play on Adam, with disastrous results to himself; and last, but not least, the coming of Doubting George with such exciting news.

When, finally, they went to bed it was with all these things fastened upon their minds; so that Elmer expected that more than one among them would be apt to "see things" in the dark that night.

The fire which, after supper, had been built larger, so that it lent a cheerful glow to the scene, was allowed to die down. Really the weather was still so sultry that it took away some of the pleasure of sitting around a blaze; which is always appreciated most when there is a tang of frost in the night air; but, then, these boys were up here for fun and did not mean to be cheated out of anything they considered their due by such a thing as hot air.

One by one they crawled under the canvas and subsided.

The coming of George promised to add to the discomfort of a crowded tent; and secretly Elmer had decided that he would not occupy his quarters of the preceding nights. It would not be a new thing at all for him to sleep out under the stars with a blanket for a covering; and, indeed, he believed he would enjoy the experience, as it must revive recollections of the past when he was accompanying the cowboys on a round-up far away from the home ranch; or else off with a comrade on a hunt in the big Rocky Mountains of Canada.

Only one more day remained, and then the wagon would come for the tent and other things that had to be transported by team. After that they could look forward to a few days of restlessness; when school duties would begin once more.

Elmer noticed that there was little talking indulged in that night. They seemed too tired all around for any "funny business," such as often marked the period when the lively boys started to go to bed.

When all seemed quiet within the tent, Elmer stepped over to where he had slyly hidden his blanket some little time before. He had already picked out the spot in which he intended passing the night. It was under a tree, where he could look up through the leafy branches, and get glimpses of the star-decked heavens. The soft, caressing touch of the night wind would lull him to sleep, he felt sure; and on the whole Elmer infinitely preferred such an experience to being crammed up against five others, in one small tent.

So he fixed himself, and lay down. By turning his head he could see the flickering fire, and imagine it surrounded by some of those good fellows whom he had known

long ago, daring riders of bucking bronchos, and expert wielders of the flying rope.

Then Elmer dropped off into a sound sleep. The last thing he remembered was hearing some one snoring in the tent; he never knew just who the guilty party might be, although his suspicions pointed to George; since they had not been afflicted up to his coming. And the sounds seemed uncertain too, just as though they were inclined to express a lingering doubt.

From this state of peace and calm the campers were suddenly aroused by a most piercing scream, that rang through the woods on the borders of the river.

Instantly a scene of wild confusion resulted. Out from the narrow exit of the tent came a struggling mass of boys in pajamas, grabbing hold of each other in their excitement.

And one lone figure might have been seen crawling under the back canvas, in much the same fashion as Elmer had done at the time he started on that hunt for the unknown party who was throwing the stones with a plunk into the river.

Elmer was on his feet instantly, and could, perhaps, be said to be the only one in the lot who had control of his senses in this emergency.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INVASION OF THE CAMP.

"OH! what is it?" cried Landy, who was actually trembling all over as he stood there in the night air, which had grown a trifle cooler during the hours they had been asleep.

"What's Elmer going to do?" exclaimed George, as he saw the patrol leader spring suddenly forward, and bend down.

"He'th got thomebody!" yelled Ted. "Perhapth it'th jutht one of the trampth come over here to rob the camp!"

"Aber I dinks me he iss yust getting some off der vood to puts on der fire," remarked Adam, who, strange to say, in all the excitement, seemed to keep fairly calm.

It turned out to be exactly the case; for immediately Elmer threw something on the smouldering fire, which started up a cheery blaze. When this came about it was wonderful how much better all of them felt. A crackling fire can do more to dispel thoughts of ghosts, and all such silly things, than any other agency.

"But Ted," said George, "I don't think you could have guessed right, because you see there ain't any sign of a tramp here."

"Sounded to me," ventured Landy, "like it was out there on the river. Say, p'raps it might have been some poor duck just going down for the last time!"

"Shucks!" grunted that unbeliever, George; "he'd

never be able to let out such a whang-doodle yell in that case. I ought to know, because I've near drowned myself twice, and all I could do was just to gurgle and kick and grab."

"How about that loon Elmer wath telling uth about?" suggested Ted, softly. "From all he thaid I reckon it'd let out jutht thuch a noithe ath that."

"Elmer, you heard it, didn't you?" demanded Landy.

"I sure did," came the reply.

"Wath it a loon, then?" went on Ted.

"Not the kind you mean, boys; I give you that straight," replied the other.

"But it came from out there on the river, didn't it?" persisted Landy, who seemed to have that notion imbedded in his brain pretty strongly.

Elmer shook his head in the negative.

"Then where did it come from?" asked Landy.

"I didn't tell you, boys," went on the patrol leader; "but knowing that six in the tent would make it stuffy, I planned to sleep out here under the stars, just as I've done many a night, you know. And so I was in a pretty good position to hear where that whoop came from."

"Tell us, Elmer, tell us right away," demanded Landy, impatiently.

"The tent!" said Elmer, without hesitation.

The boys stared at each other.

"Say, he means that one of us let that yell out," remarked Landy.

"I know I didn't!" declared George.

"Not guilty!" chirped Ted immediately, holding up his right hand as he spoke.

"Noddings doing, poys, mit me," Adam ventured to say, positively.

"How about Ty?" asked Elmer, chuckling.

"Where is he?" demanded Landy.

And thus, all at once, they awakened to the fact that one of their number was absent, though no one save Elmer had noticed this before.

Landy rushed to the tent and looked in. The fire was by this time giving out enough light to make it possible to see the entire interior.

Landy crawled inside, and almost immediately came forth again.

"Say, he ain't there! Ty's disappeared, fellows! Mebbe he's been taken with a fit, and jumped into the river!" he cried, in tones that were filled with horror.

"Elmer, what have you got to thay about that?" demanded Ted, who had noticed the significant fact that the patrol leader did not seem to share the alarm of the rest; indeed, he even smiled as though amused.

"Watch me," said Elmer.

He strode back of the tent, while the other boys waited with wondering eyes. In a minute Elmer reappeared, nor was he alone. He had hold of a shrinking figure, also clad in pajamas, and these of so violent a color that they instantly recognized them as belonging to the boy who had clung so long to that red sweater.

Yes, it was surely Ty, and he did not seem to be suffering to any great extent. There was evidence of a grin hovering around the corners of his mouth. Evidently Ty was the one who had crawled hastily under the canvas of the tent after that fearful yell had awakened the entire party. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," and Ty knew that he was probably in for a good raking, after giving his mates so great a scare.

"Hey, he's got him!" declared Landy. "Elmer knew

where to find him. See here, did you let off that awful whoop, Ty Collins?"

"I s'pose I did," replied the culprit, meekly. "I was dreaming about that old bull, you see. Thought I was sitting up there between his horns, and he was just galivanting around the whole country with me, jumpin' fences and all that. Then we came to a barn, oh, as high as the church steeple at Hickory Ridge; and as sure as you live if that critter didn't make straight for the same. I felt him rising in the air like a balloon, and then I think I must have let out a squawk, fellers."

"Listen to him, would you!" cried Landy; "he calls that a squawk! Why, it sounded like a whistle for down-brakes on the track; or else a feller falling over a precipice ten thousand feet deep! And he's got the nerve to say it was only a little squawk, just like a chicken would give!"

"Well, if you'd been dreaming like I was, you'd holler too," argued Ty. "Say, I reckon I scared myself pretty bad too, for I crawled out of the back of the tent in a big hurry, and tried to hide in the bushes. Then I heard you talkin' and it struck me what I'd done. Didn't feel much like walkin' in after that; but Elmer, he came and convinced me."

"No great harm done, boys," said Elmer. "And as Ty didn't mean to frighten anybody, we'll have to let him off this time."

"Yes, if he'll promise not to repeat the dose, we might," grumbled Landy.

"Don't believe him, if he does, because he won't keep his word," declared Doubting George.

"Well, what sort of remedy would you suggest?" asked Ty, indignantly.

"Gag him; that's the only way," returned George; "and even then I think he'd find a loophole to let out another howl. Ty always could whoop it up better than any other fellow at school. That's why they made him the cheer captain when he couldn't get in the football game on account of a sprain."

"You just try it," muttered Ty. "I've got troubles enough, and a plenty; but a gag is going it a little too strong. Elmer says it's all right, and that anybody is liable to have bad dreams. Think of what I went through with, when that bull chased after me! Forget it, fellers, and let's go back to our blankets."

"Yes, get along there, the whole bunch of you," laughed Elmer, pretending to "shoo" them as he might a flock of little chickens. "It's getting cool out here, and we've got a few more hours for sleep. So long!"

So the five crept inside the tent again, and for some little while the murmur of voices told that they did not find it so easy to drop off into sleep as on the earlier occasion.

But finally all became silent. The episode was closed; and once more sleep dominated the camp by the Sweetwater.

There was no further alarm that night. Perhaps Ty took warning from the awful proposition made by George, and found some way of restraining his inclination to dream; but no one ever knew how he did it.

When early morning came, with the cheep of birds in the thickets, Elmer was the first one to be stirring. He kindled the fire afresh, and tidied up around the camp a bit, after the manner that was so much to his liking.

Then he went down to the river and plunged in.

It was now broad daylight; indeed, the sun was peeping up beyond the low hills far away to the east. The sound

of splashing must have reached the ears of Landy as he awakened, for presently he came crawling forth.

"Hi, get up there, you sleepy-heads!" he shouted, stooping to thrust his head into the tent. "Here's Elmer occupying the whole river, and there won't be any of it left if you don't hurry!"

That brought the balance out in a hurry, and soon the six were sporting gayly in the water. Adam had to do the high dive, with all its attendant "frills," as Landy called them, in the way of double somersaults, backward and forward, in order to convince the newcomer of his accomplishments. For, of course, Doubting George refused to believe until he had been shown; and even then declared that there must be some sort of trick about it, because it stood to reason that a greenhorn could not excel in anything.

Adam, however, was too good-natured to take offense. As long as they remained in the water he was kept busy showing the many tricks he knew. Tenderfoot though he might be in most things connected with boy life in America, Adam certainly stood in a class by himself when it came to aquatic events.

Then came the pleasing job of getting breakfast. Ty, assisted by George, consented to look after that part of the business. Since George would only have one whole day in camp, with two nights thrown in, he purposed getting all he could out of it, and had laid out a list of things he wished to try before sundown, consisting of fishing, taking a few pictures with a little camera he had fetched along, and roaming the neighboring country, looking for promising nut trees for the October gathering, because George was very fond of hickory nuts, chestnuts and walnuts, in season and out.

"Just as like as not there won't be a fish willing to nibble at my bait," he grumbled, after his customary fashion; "and I'd like to wager that this year is a bad one for nuts."

"Oh, let up on that cranky way of looking at things," said Ty. "Perhaps something's the matter with your new camera too, George!"

"Well, you never know," replied the other, sighing. "It looks all right; but the proof of the pudding lies in the eating; and I'm sorter expecting the thing to turn out a fizzle. Cheap things never do amount to much, you know."

"But that was a present on your birthday!" ejaculated Ty.

"Sure it was; but all the same it's not one of the best; and I'm always suspicious of these things that don't cost top-notch prices," George continued.

"I'd just like to know what you ain't suspicious of," snapped Ty. "Here, don't you go smelling at my flapjacks like you thought there was a bad egg in 'em. Every egg we get is fresh from the coop that day, and marked gilt edge. Before I'd have a way like yours, George, I'd, well, I believe I'd jump in the river."

"I don't believe you would," grinned George, once again true to his reputation as a skeptic.

"What's Elmer going to say?" remarked Ty, as he noticed the patrol leader coming hastily into camp, with a queer look on his face.

"Get ready!" Elmer said, mysteriously.

Ty, Ted, George and Landy looked up at this.

"Get ready for what?" demanded the fat boy, attempting to gain his feet in haste, but having to clutch hold of Ted in order to assist himself.

"To vacate the camp," replied the other.

"But, Elmer, explain, won't you?" asked Ted.

"Yes, tell us why we must get out," echoed George, and adding: "I don't believe he means anything at all, that's what; he's just fooling us, fellows."

"Wait and see," Elmer continued, gravely nodding his head, although his eyes were sparkling with humor. "It's coming, and I tell you that after it arrives there won't be any room here for you fellows. It will occupy the whole place!"

"But, Elmer, what is it that's coming?" asked Landy, visions of the two desperate hoboes filling his mind.

Elmer, in reply, commenced to raise his head, and make a face as he sniffed the air.

"Just try that and see," he remarked, simply.

Upon that the whole lot started to drawing in their breath. Immediately various exclamations told that they had "caught on," as Landy expressed it.

"Oh, murder! What sort of an odor is that?" ejaculated George.

"I know!" cried Landy, who had started to clutch his nose between thumb and fingers; "it's a skunk, that's what it is. Wow! It's getting worse all the time, too!"

CHAPTER X.

THE EDUCATION OF ADAM.

THE utmost consternation seized upon the campers.

"Oh! what's bringing all that smell along here?" George cried; for this was his first experience with such a thing, though he had heard lots about other adventures the scouts had had in that line.

"It's Adam; he's got a monopoly of the scent!" laughed Elmer. "And he's on his way to the camp right now. I saw him coming, and got a whiff; then I hurried on to warn you, because I didn't want you to be caught unprepared. There's one good thing about it, though, fellows."

"Good thing?" ejaculated Ted, who had snatched out his handkerchief and was trying to keep from inhaling more air than was absolutely necessary.

"Why, yes," Elmer went on, "for once George here doesn't doubt but that he gets it. You don't hear him asking questions now. He *knows* it's here with us. He's getting his dose, all right, ain't you, George?"

"Look, there he comes!" gasped Landy, pointing to a moving figure that was pawing a way through the neighboring thicket.

"Ach! vat iss de matter mit me? I feels like I vas goin' to faint!" exclaimed a complaining voice.

"For goodness' sake do it out there, then!" screamed Landy. "Don't you dare come into camp with that terrible smell hanging to you. Sit down where you are, and

listen to what we've got to say. Oh, gracious, I can't get my breath! Elmer, you tell him!"

"Py chimineddy, dis makes me some drouples! It peats all der limpurger cheese I ever saw. Vat vos idt, Elmer? I am nodt choking, tell me vot I dood," Adam asked, with a beseeching air, for he was almost overcome by the fumes.

"Well, if you ain't choking, we are; so you stay there," George remarked.

"How did it happen, Adam?" asked Elmer, trying to stop laughing, for he knew that after all this was apt to be a serious piece of business for the other.

But the German boy only shook his head and coughed, as he tried to get his breath.

"Idt iss some foolishness py me; but, poys, I don't know vot it iss already yet. I vos vandering apout der voods, enchoying mineself, ven I see der prettiest little squirrel dot ever vos, mit a nice white stripe, und a pushy tail. I dinks dot he look like he vill pe friends mit me, und so I yust hold out mine hand und call him; put pefore I could take hold mit him, I dink I step on von of dem musherooms mit der awful smell. Ach! it vos so pad I haf to get oudt right avay, und come pack to der gamp. I'm von sick Dutchman, poys, pelieve me. I dink me I must pe going to die right avay qvick."

"I should think you had died a week ago," cried George.

"He thought the skunk was a pretty squirrel," said Ty; "and he was going to make a pet of it, think of that, fellows!"

They laughed and coughed by turns. One minute the comical side of the event appealed to them, as they saw poor Adam standing there looking so forlorn; then as if by magic their humor turned, and they began to wonder what in the wide world could be done.

"We just can't stand this much longer, Elmer," said Landy. "Make him go away off in the woods and bury himself."

"Well, one thing's sure," remarked the patrol leader. "He's got to get rid of every stitch he has on him. We'll have to rig him out the best we can afterwards."

Adam set up a howl upon hearing this.

"I pelieve it might wash oudt in der river!" he declared.

"Not in a thousand years," Landy made answer. "The only chance for you is to go off and bury your clothes—everything you've got on. Then get in the water, and try to get rid of the smell from your hair. Lucky thing it's cut short. Oh, ain't this the meanest luck, though?"

"It might be worse if the whole lot of us had been there and got our share," remarked Elmer, who could always see things on the bright side, in which he was the exact reverse of Doubting George.

"Dell me vat I must do, Elmer. I promise to carry oudt de plans. Somedings must pe done right qvick, or I shall pe smothered. It is pad; but I am von scout, und can take der hard knocks mit der good."

"That's the kind of talk, Adam," Elmer hastened to say. "You're all right, even if you do seem unpleasant company just now. Listen to me. Go back into the woods a piece. Then strip off every rag and hide them in some hollow log. I'll follow you when you go to the river, and fetch along what stuff we find we can spare. All told I reckon there'll be a shirt, trousers and shoes for you; and that's all you need this hot weather. Please make a start, for we've got to the end of our endurance. Turn around; now you're off!"

When the unfortunate German lad had vanished, the

trouble was far from being at an end. He left a decided legacy behind him, and Landy was loud in his wails.

"How ever can we stand it, Elmer?" he asked. "All the rest of the time we stay in camp do we just have to endure that rank odor?"

"'What can't be cured must be endured,' you remember we used to write in our copybooks at school, Landy," replied the patrol leader. "Nothing like getting used to things, you know. It isn't pleasant, of course; but there might be worse happen to us. Suppose now our new recruit had run across a rattlesnake instead of a polecat! But get a hustle on you, fellows, and see if we can rig Adam out somehow. I've got an extra shirt he's welcome to."

"And there's that pair of trousers I brought along," said Landy; "he can get into them all right. But I'll say good-by when I hand 'em over; for I just know the perfume will stick always; and I never could stand it, never."

Some one else came forward with shoes, and in this fashion the wretched victim of confiding innocence and curiosity was supplied with an outfit calculated to carry him through.

Taking these things with him, Elmer started forth along the trail of Adam.

"Just follow your nose, and you'll find him!" sang out Landy.

"And look out you don't repeat his sad experience, Elmer," laughed Ty.

The woods seemed to be pretty strong with the powerful odor, as Elmer walked on. He was a fair hand at following a trail, and the German lad had certainly not made any effort to conceal his footprints.

Presently Elmer found where Adam had stuffed his garments into a hollow log, just as he had been told; but as

he was no longer in sight, the scout patrol leader took it for granted that he had turned to head for the river again, in order to plunge in.

Accordingly Elmer also turned and walked that way, believing that he would strike the stream a little distance below the camp.

"Goodness! I hope, now, Adam doesn't lose himself in the woods!" he exclaimed, as a sudden startling thought flashed into his mind. "Wouldn't that just be the limit, though, and with not a bit of clothes along!"

But a minute later he caught sight of the other stalking along ahead. The river could also be seen in glimpses between the trees, showing that after all Adam had chosen the right course.

"Well, what ails him now?" Elmer asked himself, for as he looked he suddenly saw the German boy bound up into the air, and start to threshing about with his hands in the wildest kind of way.

Then he started to run madly along, letting out a series of shouts, and finally taking a header from the bank into the river.

Something came buzzing about Elmer's head.

"Hornets!" he exclaimed, making a stroke at the insistent insect that was trying to reach his face, until by a fortunate blow he sent it down.

Then he started off, making a wide detour so as to avoid the spot where the unlucky Adam must have run foul of the nest.

When he finally drew up at the river bank and peeped over, he saw Adam with everything but the upper part of his head submerged. He seemed to be looking for a new assortment of enemies hovering over him. His introduction to the mysteries of the great American woods bade fair to

make a great impression on Adam. Indeed, when finally Elmer induced him to come forth, he discovered that there were three distinct impressions, and each of them as large as a hickory nut, one being behind the ear, another on his right arm, and a third on the calf of his leg, where the angry little hornets had left their mark.

No doubt the new recruit thought he was having a pretty rough time of it all told. But he had a genial nature, and could take things as they came; so that presently he was able to laugh at his misfortunes.

When he was dressed in the borrowed clothes Adam looked a "sight," as Landy declared after he saw him coming to the camp. Of course there must hover around him more or less of the strong odor; but Elmer told the others they must make up their minds to get used to that, as it could not be remedied.

Breakfast had been ready for some little time when the pair reached the camp; and all of them were able to do justice to the meal. Even Adam seemed to have retained his appetite.

"But it's the only thing he did save," chuckled Landy.

When the meal was over, Elmer reminded them of the arrangement they had made on the previous evening.

"Who goes along with me to Brady's?" he asked, getting up.

"Don't you think we'd all better paddle along?" remarked Landy; "because, you see, those fellows are tough characters; and it might be they'd set on our crowd, if they suspected we'd come to tell on 'em."

"Count me out," said George. "You know I got a stone bruise yesterday when on the way here, and I want to let it heal up, so's to be able to toddle back home when we break camp to-morrow."

"Oh, rats! The chances are you don't think there's anything worth while in going over there," declared Ty. "And I meant to show you just where I had all that fun with the old bull, too."

"Fun!" shrieked Landy. "Hear that, will you, boys? He calls that business just fun. But it looked another way, then, you understand, George. Why, Ty's face was as white as paper when he thought that old bundle of beef was going to hook him higher than a kite!"

But Ty declined to argue the matter with him.

"And I think Adam had better thtay at home, don't you, Elmer?" remarked Ted.

"Why, he's that strong he could tackle the hobo crowd alone and single-handed," observed Ty.

"I'm afraid he'd turn all the milk in the dairy," chuckled Landy.

So it was presently decided that two of the scouts were to remain behind to take charge of the camp. The others, four in number, would trail along toward the Brady farm; and if the opportunity presented itself, let the farmer's women folks know the character of the new hands.

The last that Elmer and his comrades saw of those who were to remain behind, George seemed to be endeavoring to coax Adam to try his luck again on the river, for he was holding out the rod of the German.

"He just wants to get him away for a while," laughed Ty.

"It looks like George had run up against something at last that won't stand for any doubts," declared Landy, who had long suffered from this peculiar malady on the part of his cousin.

"If it can't be seen, it makes itself felt in another way,"

remarked Elmer, who was in the lead of the file that headed through the woods, Ted swinging the tin milk bucket.

Reaching the field where Ty had had so much "fun" with the ugly bull, they failed to see anything of the animal.

"Afraid to come out again, you see, boys," said Ty, pretending to puff out with valor. "I guess the farmer who owns him will keep him shut up till we leave the neighborhood. He'd better, for I was just hatching up some game that would discourage the old fellow from tackling every one that walked through his pasture."

"Perhaps he's loose, and carrying on somewhere else," remarked Elmer, as he lifted his head in an attitude of listening.

"Say, that *is* somebody shouting, as sure as you live!" cried Landy.

"And hollering to beat the band, too!" echoed Ty.

The whole four of them stood still, the better to listen. There could be no longer the least doubt about the matter; for other voices joined in with the one they had heard at first.

"It's women yelling, too," said Landy. "Whatever can be the matter? Elmer, do you think it's that bull broke loose?"

"More'n likely the hoboes are at the bottom of the row!" declared Ty.

"Come on with me, fellows, and we'll soon know!" called Elmer, as he immediately started off on a full run.

CHAPTER XI.

A LOUD CALL FOR HELP.

A BELL began to ring wildly near by.

"That's over to the place where the bull belongs; sure the row ain't there, Elmer?" asked Ty, as he hurried on the heels of the leader.

Elmer paused to listen again.

"No," he said, positively, "most all the racket is over yonder in the direction of the Brady house. You can hear the women screaming, too. Come along again, boys! They've heard the racket over here, and that bell's to call the men in from the fields."

"Sounds just for all the world like what I've read about an Injun attack in the good old pioneer days," declared the panting Landy, who had to exert himself more than any of the others in order to keep up with the procession.

"Theemth like I thmell thmoke!" remarked Ted.

"I reckon you do, because I've been getting it for the last half minute," Elmer threw over his shoulder as he ran on.

"That means a fire!" cried Ty.

"It generally does," Elmer added, dryly.

"What if the Brady house is going up in flames?" ejaculated Ty, again.

"It would be a bad job," remarked Elmer; "but not quite as hard on them as if it happened in the dead of winter, with the thermometer down to zero."

"But it's always a hard job fighting fire in such steaming hot weather as this September spell!" Landy observed, as he dug for his handkerchief, so as to wipe his red face, which was beginning to reek with perspiration.

"There, I saw smoke over the trees; it's a house afire, as sure as anything, boys, and the Brady one at that!" declared Ty.

None of them doubted it now, since all the indications seemed to point that way. They kept up their forward rush, hoping to at least be able to lend a helping hand in the way of getting some of the furniture out; because that is generally all that can be done at a country blaze, when there are no fire engines to respond to the call for aid.

They were rapidly overtaking several persons who seemed to be hurrying in the same direction they themselves were bound. Two of these were women, and the other a very old man, whom the excitement had stirred into unwonted action.

"What is it?" asked Elmer, as he was passing the three.

"The Brady house must be afire!" answered a young woman, who seemed to have her wits fairly well in hand.

None of the boys stopped, though Landy's tongue was almost hanging from his mouth because of the exertion on such a hot morning. They continued to bound along steadily, and expected to come in sight of the burning house at any moment now.

As they burst out from the cover it stood before them. Smoke was coming from windows and doors in heavy volumes; and evidently the fire must have managed to get considerable headway before being discovered.

A number of women were running excitedly up and down doing nothing to aid in saving property, or subduing the flames. Several men were present, and seemed to be wholly

engaged in carrying out some of the furniture belonging to the parlor. A small cabinet organ had been rolled over on the grass, and then they added heaps of books to the wreckage.

"Why don't they try and save the house, Elmer?" asked Ty, as they saw what was going on.

"I don't know, unless it's because they have no leader, and nobody is able to tell what to do," replied the other.

Elmer was taking the scene in with eyes that nothing escaped. Even while he was running forward toward the fire he saw that there was a fair-sized stream close to the barns. His attention was directed to it chiefly because of a flock of big white Pekin ducks that were flapping their wings, and adding their loud quacks to the general excitement.

"If we only could find plenty of buckets, something might be done!" he called back over his shoulder, never stopping an instant in making for the building that was threatened with destruction.

"I see three right now by that pump!" cried Ty.

"Plenty more in the barn, Elmer!" added Ted, who saw what the other had in his mind, and thought it worth trying.

"There's a lot of tin milk buckets hanging on that fence!" called Landy.

"Go for 'em, fellows!" ordered the patrol leader. "Gather all you can find, and begin to fill 'em at the brook. I'll see if these ladies won't stand in line, and pass them along."

"Hurrah for the Hickory Ridge Fire Brigade!" shouted Landy, fully filled with the novel idea.

Each of them made a bee-line for the buckets in sight, and, gathering up all they could lay hands on, immediately

started for the water, where a great dipping began, to the intense amazement and consternation of the ducks, which could not understand why these strangers should try to empty their favorite little stream without asking their permission.

Meanwhile Elmer must have managed to explain after a fashion what he purposed doing. He had already coaxed two of the women to stand ready to take the buckets as they came along, and these were shouting to the others.

"More buckets! Try in the barns for some!" called Elmer, as, seizing one of the first that arrived, he rushed up to where a tongue of fire had suddenly darted out of a window, like a snake that was striking, and sent the contents of his receptacle through into the room.

Now something a little more like sense seemed to seize upon those present. All they needed was a leader, some one capable of giving orders; and it would be surprising how much could be accomplished.

The men stopped trying to save the furniture. If the building could be kept from burning to the ground the things it contained might have a chance of being spared. They rushed away to the barn, as though knowing where horse buckets were to be found; and Elmer knew that he had found several willing allies in his battle with the flames.

He saw that these men were the farmer himself, and his son, almost a man in size. The two farm hands were not to be seen; and this fact gave Elmer a strong idea that in truth they might have been responsible for the fire itself. Sometimes when a robbery has been committed the thieves will try to cover all traces of their work by burning the building.

By the time those other women had arrived he believed he would have enough on the ground to form a living chain

between the brook and the house, so that the full buckets could be passed swiftly along from hand to hand, and the empties returned after the same fashion for a fresh start.

Inside of five minutes after the Boy Scouts arrived on the spot it was a lively scene that was taking place. The smoke continued to pour out of the windows; but whenever a bit of flame showed itself, Elmer or Ty was ready to dash a bucket of water on the same.

"Keep up the good work, fellows!" shouted Landy, who was filling the buckets at the time. "She ain't gaining much, now; and every one that comes just adds to the fire brigade, so's to send the buckets along faster. I'm coming over to help fight soon as that farmer's boy gets here!"

"Say, if only we had all our troop here, Elmer, wouldn't we make short work of it, though?" asked Ty, who was beginning to turn many shades darker because of the smoke that swept past him every little while.

"We'll do it as we are!" answered the patrol leader, firmly; for he believed that they must soon begin to get the mastery over the hungry flames.

Then Landy came staggering along, bearing with him a huge bucket, which he expected to dash personally on some place where it would do the most good. The farmer's boy had arrived to take his place at the brook, which set him free for sterner duties.

"Go for it, fellers!" he gasped; and then as a wicked looking finger of fire darted out toward him he emptied the contents of his pail in that direction. "Plenty more where that came from. The crick'll hold out all right, if only we can get it up here fast enough. That's the way, Ty, soak it to the measly old thing. We're going to win out yet, see?"

It was the right sort of spirit to show at any rate; and afterwards his chums had only words of praise for Landy's conduct.

"If we c'n only hold out long enough, we're just bound to knock this old fire into a cocked hat!" Ty managed to cry out, as he seized another bucket, and turned to look for a chance to use it.

Just then he noticed a small girl standing near by, sobbing as if her heart would break. She seemed to be looking up toward the second story windows of the house that was on fire, as though there might be something that she longed to save up there.

Ty was immediately thrilled with the thought that it might be a human being. Nobody had as yet said anything about a missing person, whether a child, a very old man, or a woman; but this might come from the fact that such tremendous excitement held everybody in its grip.

Ty had read about daring feats which lads no older than himself had performed at such critical times. Perhaps within his soul there burned a desire to outshine these heroes of fact and fiction; and do something to make the name of Tyrus Collins go ringing down the ages, on the annals of heroes who have risked their lives in order to save others.

At any rate, as soon as he had emptied the bucket he was holding, he passed it along to the nearest woman, and then whirled upon the little girl.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

She turned to him eagerly.

"Oh, he'll be burned, my little baby, Bennie!" she wailed, wringing her hands as if in the greatest woe.

Ty was thrilled by the words. Here then was the golden opportunity he had long sought. A baby, she had said,

forgotten in the mad rush and excitement. And to him had come the chance to show of what metal scouts were made.

"Where is he—show me the window of the room!" he demanded in such a stern tone that the child shrank back; but she managed to point upward and say:

"That window—it's the little room over the front hall! Oh, if you could only bring him out, mister; everybody's too busy to remember poor little Bennie!"

That finished Ty. He heard the call to duty and was off. Still, he kept his wits about him fairly well, and did not plunge recklessly into the building.

His first act was to take another look upward, so that he might locate the window she had mentioned, and remember which it was when groping about the interior. Elmer was close by; but although he turned toward the patrol leader at first, Ty changed his mind, fearing that he might be interfered with in his bold designs.

No, if a rescue must be made, he would go it alone; and hence all the glory that was coming would be his.

"Here, take that full bucket and follow me, Ty!" called Elmer, who saw a chance to deluge a threatened point in such a way that the fire would be fully beaten back in that quarter.

He supposed the other was carrying out his suggestion, and did not know any different until on turning he found himself face to face with Landy, who had quickly taken the place of the one called upon.

"Where's Ty?" asked Elmer, as upon looking around he failed to discover the figure of his late assistant.

"He's gone in!" declared Landy, seeming to be a little appalled by something he had witnessed.

"Gone in where?" continued the other, hardly understanding what was meant.

" He rushed right into the house like he'd lost his senses, Elmer; whatever do you think made him act like that? " Landy replied.

The patrol leader looked aghast.

" I'm sure I don't know," he replied, " unless he heard that some one was in there, and might be smothered or burned. But it was a nervy thing for Ty to do. I only hope he comes out again all right! "

CHAPTER XII.

SHOWING THEIR METTLE.

"Oh, thay, can't we do anything to thave him?"

It was, of course, Ted, with his lisp, who said this. He had come up while the others were talking, and seemed to understand the situation; perhaps he had even witnessed the strange dash of Ty Collins into the burning farmhouse.

Elmer shook his head in the negative, as he replied:

"You see, the smoke is so heavy that even if one of us did go in, the chances are he'd never be able to find Ty. We'll have to let him alone. Ty has a long head on him, and generally knows what he's doing. Let's work away here as fast as they fetch us the full buckets, and hope our chum will get out again. Here, hand me that pail, Ted; and get busy, Landy. No time to be staring around."

Landy seemed to be half stunned because of the queer actions of the scout who had entered the house. He was standing there looking up at the row of windows, out of which the smoke curled and eddied, as though he expected an answer to the puzzling question there.

But the energy of the patrol leader influenced him; and taking the bucket that had reached the end of the line of men and women, he hastened to dash its contents in the spot Elmer indicated.

The boys were all showing more or less signs of exhaustion by this time, owing to the terrific heat, caused by the stickiness of the weather, and the influence of the fire.

But not one of them gave any indication of showing the white feather. They seemed to feel that the honor of the scouts was involved in this fight for the farmer's home; and with set teeth they continued to ply the water.

"We're gaining a little all the time, fellows!" exclaimed Elmer, meaning to bolster up the courage of both Ted and Landy; though often he would cast an anxious eye up at those mute windows, as though beginning to fear that the missing chum would never again appear.

"Yeth," said Ted, dolefully, "but every time we leave a plathe to go to a new one, the fire tharth out again freth ath a daithy. If only a lot more men would come to help uth out, we might get it under."

"We will do it, boys, just make up your minds to that," gasped Elmer, as he once more gripped a big stable bucket and started back to the window through which he expected to hurl the contents. "We've got the grit to stick to the job to the bitter end, and grit wins the day every time. Hurry up there with that other pail; and tell them to find some more, if they can. Anything will do that can hold water. We've just *got* to put this thing out! That's the way, Landy; you did a good jo. that time!"

Those words of praise did more to inspire new faith and confidence in the heart of the almost exhausted fat boy than anything else could have done. He seemed to pluck up fresh courage, braced himself to his task, and even grinned at Elmer, although it was a sickly attempt at a smile.

Landy was, indeed, a sight just then. He was wet to the skin with perspiration and spilled water from the creek. Besides, his usually jolly face was streaked with a series of queer marks, where the black smoke had found

lodgment, and been ground in every time he drew his sleeve across his smarting eyes.

But then the others were little better off, though possibly they did not feel the terrible heat quite so much as the stout youth. Regardless of the damage to their clothes they labored faithfully on, determined that the Hickory Ridge troop was bound to receive new honor because of what they did at the Brady fire.

Seconds had merged into minutes, and Elmer's anxiety grew to an alarming extent. What if poor Ty had, indeed, fallen in the midst of that smoke and was lying there now in the house helpless?

It was a terrible thought, and made him shiver, even though at the time he was also burning with the heat. Suffocation was just as bad as the fire itself; and Elmer began to argue with himself that perhaps it was his sacred duty to rush into the house in the endeavor to find Ty.

He looked at Landy and Ted with almost pity in his eyes, and yet at that moment the young patrol leader was proud of his chums. Never had there been a test of endurance where the stake meant so much. If they could save the Brady home surely that were far better than any prize which might have fallen to their prowess because of a great hike, or a swimming distance match!

Suddenly he heard Landy give a shrill yell.

"There he is, Elmer! Hurrah for Ty!"

The fat boy was pointing a trembling finger upward; and following its general direction Elmer saw a head thrust forth from a certain window in the second story.

Ty did not seem disposed to pay the slightest attention to his chums, though the three of them stood there waving their hands and shouting. He was beckoning wildly to the little girl who had been standing near by all the while,

with her eager eyes riveted on the window above, just as though she expected a miracle to be wrought in her favor.

When Ty's head poked into view as through a curtain, for eddies of smoke were all around the scout, the child began to dance up and down, and clap her hands. At that moment Ty Collins came nearer to being a real hero in the eyes of a girl than ever before in all his life.

"Come closer!" he shouted, and as she did so, he continued: "Where did you say Bennie was, up here? Is this the room?"

"Yes, yes," she replied, nodding her head at the same time, as if in fear lest he might not hear her childish voice in the midst of so much noise, with women calling, and newcomers asking questions as they reached the scene.

"Where did you leave him?" demanded the intrepid rescuer.

"Over in the corner—the box on the floor—Bennie was naughty, and he had to be punished!" she cried at the top of her shrill voice.

Ty immediately disappeared, while his three chums below waited with astonishment written on their faces, not knowing what it all meant.

"Did you hear that, Elmer?" demanded Landy, plucking at the wet sleeve of the other. "She said the baby was in a box! Don't that beat the Dutch, though? Whatever could she have been thinking of to do such a thing?"

"It wath the thillieth ever!" declared Ted, "thtuffing a baby in a box jutht like he wath a rag doll!"

"Hold on and see," said Elmer, who must have had some sort of suspicion as to the true state of affairs.

All eyes were riveted on that window. Seconds passed as before, and the boys began to get nervous again be-

cause Ty failed to appear. Had he found the baby really smothered? Was he attempting to carry the poor little darling down the stairs through all that dreadful smoke?

"Oh, look! look!" cried Landy.

There was no need of his saying this, because everyone near by had been watching that window eagerly, and no doubt saw what was happening just as quickly as the fat boy did; but then Landy was so worked up with excitement that he could not restrain himself.

Yes, Ty was there in full sight again. This time he was leaning from the window, and seemed to be holding something in his arms.

"Hold on there, Ty," shouted Ted, feeling a thrill of horror, as he fancied his fellow scout must be about to heave the poor little innocent darling from that second story window, in the hope of somebody catching it before it could reach the ground. "Give uth a thanthe to get under firtht."

"Yes, hold your horses, old fellow!" panted Landy, as he started forward with outstretched arms.

But, singular to say, Ty seemed to pay little or no attention to their demands; though Elmer was sure he could see a broad grin on the blackened face of the one who leaned out of the window to get away from the smoke.

"Here, take your baby, little girl!" he shouted hoarsely, as he began to lower away on a strange rope, which Elmer decided he must have made by tearing a sheet into long strips, and tying these together.

Something came down, foot by foot—something that struggled, and made frantic attempts at getting free from the encircling rope.

"Wow! it's a pup!" shrieked the astonished Landy.

"Well, I do declare!" echoed Ted.

Elmer laughed aloud, as he started once more at the task of emptying several buckets that had meanwhile arrived at the end of the human chain. For wise Elmer had guessed the truth before the moment when the other two made their discovery.

The little girl darted forward and snatched the small woolly dog up the moment it touched the ground. She began to hug "Bennie" with all the ardor of an indulgent little mistress; and, then freeing him from the torn sheet, ran off toward the women as if to show her recovered prize to her mother.

"Now come down yourself, Ty!" shouted Elmer. "Don't you think of going back by way of the stairs, d'ye hear?"

Ty waved his hand. Perhaps his voice was utterly gone by this time, thanks to the smoke and his exertions. They saw him swing out of the window; and Elmer understood from this that at least the scout had considerable power left in his arms and lower limbs.

Now his feet were on a little ledge that ran along the face of the house above the lower windows. Ty had noticed that a shutter was partly open and meant to make use of this in his descent. It was a clever idea, and did the boy great credit in the way of judgment. A veteran fireman, accustomed to such things, could hardly have conceived a better plan of campaign.

Once his feet were planted on top of this, Ty gave a sudden move, and they saw him slipping down until his ready hands caught the upper edge of the heavy blind. After that he dropped to the ground in a heap, to quickly stagger to his feet once more.

"Hurrah for Ty!" shouted Landy, making the high sign of fellowship in the direction of his chum; for he was

too busily engaged just then to think of abandoning his buckets in order to rush to Ty's side so as to shake hands with the hero of the occasion.

What if it was only a miserable little woolly pup that he had managed to save from possible destruction; it would have been all the same had it been the real baby that the child had given him to understand was in peril. And Ty need never feel ashamed of his brave act. It shed new luster on the name of the Hickory Ridge Boy Scout troop; and Elmer was determined that when the account was written up, there should be no hint of humor in the same that might reflect in any way on Ty's act.

Immediately Ty got busy again, and proceeded to fight the fire with renewed vigor, though the poor fellow did look as though he had almost reached the end of his resources. Twice did Elmer tell him to drop out, and try to recover; but for once Ty refused to obey orders, under the plea that, as they were not really in uniform, it was not obligatory on his part.

"Now something is going to happen!" said Landy, as he brushed past Elmer while warmly engaged; and at the same time he pointed across the open space to where a party of stout farm hands had burst into view, running as fast as they could toward the fire.

"More bucketh coming, boyth!" called Ted, who had seen that each one of the newcomers was armed with at least one big pail; which fact proved that they must have suspected the cause of the wild alarm before they left home, and had provided in this wise manner against a dearth of vessels for fighting the flames.

When those fellows got busy, hurrying up from the friendly creek, each with a fresh supply of energy, and a pair of big buckets that were filled to the brim with the

liquid so needful in order to check the spread of the flames, things began to look more cheerful.

"Now we've got it on the run, fellows!" cried Landy, almost hysterical through sheer weakness, and his grim determination not to give up so long as he could put one foot before the other.

"Thay, look at that giant bringing a wath boiler full of water at a time!" exclaimed the delighted Ted, almost forgetting to lisp, so great was his excitement. "When he geth thtarted, it'th good-by to the old fire. Whoop! hear it thizzle, would you? Hit it again, mithter; it never will be mithed! Now it'th your turn, Elmer. One, two, three, and thet 'em up again in the other alley! We win, boyth, we win!"

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE SCOUTS WON OUT.

THE newcomers, whose coming the boys had noted with pleasure, certainly showed signs of knowing how to fight a fire in the country. In the first place, they had brought their tools of trade along with them, in the shape of buckets. Doubtless they remembered that on former occasions the fire had gained headway simply on account of a lack of receptacles for water.

Then they knew the brook, and that an abundance of water could be had for the taking. Last of all every man was full of vim, judging from the way they started in to whoop things up.

Besides, their coming seemed to invigorate those already on the ground, and who, by reason of long service, were nearly exhausted.

"'Everybody's doin' it,' fellers!" gasped Landy, as he staggered forward with his sixteenth bucket, and gave the contents a fling.

"It'th a burning thame, what we're doing to that old fire, don't you know?" laughed Ted, who followed close on the fat boy's heels.

"Keep it going another round, boys," shouted Elmer; "and by that time, I reckon, there won't be any more need of water. We've saved the house, even if it is damaged a little with water and smoke and fire. That's the ticket, Ty; you're making a record worth while to-day, old fellow! Once more to the breach; then it's rest for yours."

"All out!" cried Landy, in another minute, as he dropped his bucket and sank in a limp heap on the ground, a sight that would have caused his good mother to throw up her hands in horror.

But Landy was proud of having had a chance to prove his right to the name of a Hickory Ridge Boy Scout. He grinned, and looked particularly happy; for he knew that when the history of the saving of the Brady home was written, his name would surely have a place of honor among those who participated in the good work.

By this time there were fully forty people present. How the news got abroad it would be hard to say. Some of the farmers in that neighborhood had telephones, and in this way it may have been passed along the line; but there were many other methods in which the fire could have made itself manifest.

New people kept arriving every few minutes; while a few went away again to attend to the urgent business of getting in their late crops.

The four scouts remained in a bunch, talking matters over, and trying to recover a little from their tremendous exertions before returning to the camp.

"Thay, how d'ye thuppothe the old thing got thtarted?" Ted asked, with the natural curiosity of a boy.

"That's so," echoed Landy. "It must have been an accident, don't you think, Elmer?" for even in such a matter as this they seemed to turn to the patrol leader for information.

"I'm sure I can't say, fellows," replied Elmer. "At this time in the morning the hands on a farm are out in the fields, and the women washing up the breakfast things. Perhaps they've got a gasoline stove here, and somebody was careless. It happens now and then."

"But here comes Mr. Brady over this way; he may know what started the old blaze," remarked Ty.

"Looks kind of smiling," ventured Landy; "which I take it is some singular for a gentleman whose house has pretty near gone up in smoke. Tell you what, I know why he's heading this way, fellows."

"Then thay it right out, Landy," remarked Ted, who had noted how the fat boy looked toward Ty and grinned.

"He's coming with a handful of thanks for our brave chum here, on account of how he saved the little Brady girl's darling baby, Bennie," said Landy.

"Huh!" snorted Ty, "I did my best, anyhow, and that's all any fellow c'n do. How was I to know it was only a silly little purp, and not a real human being? Didn't she call it the baby? Laugh all you want, Landy; but all I c'n say is that I reckon anyone of you fellers would have done just as bad."

"And that's as fine a compliment as you could pay us, Ty!" declared Elmer, heartily. "As for me, I want to say right here and now that I'm proud of the way you went into that burning house, thinking that a poor little baby was in danger. In my mind it's just as if you had done what you meant to; and I'm glad to own you as a chum. Never mind if some fellows try to have a little fun out of it; they don't mean anything by it. But here's Mr. Brady."

The farmer was a heavy-set man in the prime of life. He, too, had worked hard in the effort to save his house; but despite his anxiety and fatigue, he approached the four scouts with kindling eyes and an outstretched hand.

"I want to shake hands with every one of you boys," he said, earnestly. "Only for you coming when you did, and takin' hold with such a vim, I guess the old Brady

farmhouse would have gone up that time. I see you all wear trousers and leggings that say you belong to the Hickory Ridge Boy Scouts; and make sure that I don't mean to forget this. I want the name of every one of you, and I'm going to make it a point to see your folks, to tell them what reason they've got to be proud of having such boys in the family."

The way that horny hand of the farmer squeezed those of the boys told that he meant every word he uttered. Landy winced under the pressure, and came very near crying out for mercy; only he remembered that this would not seem just right, when they were at the time being complimented on their manly qualities.

"We're only too glad that we happened to be coming over to your place at just the right time, Mr. Brady," remarked Elmer. "If we'd been at our camp, perhaps we might not have known of the fire until it was too late to do much good."

"Coming to see me, the four of you, were you?" said the other, looking a trifle curious. "What could I do for you, boys? All you have to do is to mention it; after your noble work this morning I guess it'd be hard for me to refuse any favor."

"But you see, sir," Landy exclaimed, "we didn't want to ask a favor. Fact is, we wanted to do you one, perhaps."

"I have been looking around, Mr. Brady," observed Elmer, "and I failed to see your two new hands working to save the house—the short man and his tall mate."

Immediately the face of the farmer darkened, and they saw his hands close with a movement that seemed to speak of anger.

"No, you didn't, my lad, and for a very good reason,"

he said, breathing hard. "They turned out to be a pair of rascals. My daughter caught them in the act of robbing the house this very morning. I had sent them out into a field back of the barns, and they knew that with my son and the horses I expected to go to another part of the farm. So they waited till the coast was clear, and then sneaked back to the house, entering through a window when the women folks were busy in the kitchen and dairy."

"Oh!" gasped Landy, who had not dreamed that this could be the explanation of the fire; "then they must have been caught in the act, and did it for revenge?"

"Just what they did," replied Mr. Brady, with his teeth gritting in anger. "My oldest daughter just happened to go upstairs, and ran across them turning things upside down in the search for valuables. She screamed, and knowing that the rest of the women folks must have heard the row, the scoundrels deliberately put matches to things, and then, jumping from the windows, made off, laughing."

"Did they steal much from you, Mr. Brady?" asked Ty.

"That I don't know yet, because the fire took up all my attention as soon as I got on the ground. And I don't bother much about what they took, I'm that thankful about saving my house, and that nobody was hurt," the farmer went on.

"Not even little Bennie," murmured Landy; though Elmer gave him a reproachful look.

"Well, sir," the patrol leader went on, "it happens that we were just on our way here to warn you about your new hands. One of our troop arrived in camp last night, and told us a story about two tramps trying to wreck the express train; and that the officers of several towns were looking for them. When he described the fellows some

of us thought the two new hands might be the ones who were wanted."

"Yes," Ty spoke up, "and if Elmer had had his way we'd have come to see you last night; but the rest of the bunch, being lazy or tired, voted to wait till morning. Elmer knew best; he nearly always does."

"Well," the farmer went on, "it was nice of you to think of giving me warning any time; and mighty lucky that you were on your way here when the fire started. Only for that there would be a heap of ruins here, instead of my old house, which has been in the family many generations."

"You say the two men ran away, Mr. Brady?" remarked Elmer, who felt more or less curiosity concerning their movements.

"So the women folks say," came the reply. "Connie, my girl, the one who came on them while they were turning things upside down, looking under the mattresses of the beds for money, and even under the edges of the carpets. She says they ran toward the barns. But I had the horses with me, so they didn't find a mount."

"Thay, perhapth they're hiding right now over there in the haymow, or thomewhere!" suggested Ted.

"Oh, my goodness! That would be too good a thing, wouldn't it?" cried Landy, scrambling to his feet, part of his weariness seeming to leave him at the prospect of new excitement.

"I never thought of that, now," said the farmer. "The rascals might have made up their minds that, after all the excitement was over, another chance would crop up to do some clever robbery. Perhaps I'd be wise to get some of the men together, and take a look through the barns."

"Wait a minute, Mr. Brady," said Elmer. "Because,

unless I miss my guess, yonder comes a car that holds some men in uniforms, and they may turn out to be officers from Hickory Ridge, Fairfield, or some other place, looking for information about these very two men."

"Bully! Wouldn't that just be the best thing ever, to think of their happening here when we need them so much," remarked Landy, staring at the coming car.

"They must have been passing by when they met some of the neighbors going home, and learned of the fire," ventured Mr. Brady, who made a motion with his arm to attract the attention of the big, pompous-looking officer who was getting out of the automobile.

"I know who he is," remarked Ty. "That's the head of the police over at Fairfield. His name is Benchley. I've talked with him more'n once. Why, he used to run some sort of auction shop before they made him the chief over there. And here he comes to interview us. My! Just get on to his strut, will you, fellows?"

"Everybody look out how you talk when he's around!" exclaimed Landy. "He looks as if he'd like to pinch everybody around, and slap 'em into the cooler, just to keep his hand in."

But Mr. Brady had stepped out to meet the man in uniform.

"What's been going on here, mister?" asked the officer, with a heavy frown in the direction of the four boys; as though he might be so accustomed to having his share of trouble with the untamed youths of Fairfield and Cramertown, that he naturally came to the conclusion, when anything went wrong, in most cases, it could be traced back to the depravity of the rising generation.

Evidently Mr. Benchley was always at war with the boys of his town, which was one of the greatest mistakes

the head of the police force could make. In Hickory Ridge they managed things better, for the chief there had long since won the respect of most of the lads, who knew they had a good friend in the head of the force.

"Been having a fire; but we were fortunate enough to get it under control before much damage had been done," replied Mr. Brady.

"Did these chaps have anything to do with it?" demanded the pompous man in uniform, again frowning at Elmer and his chums.

"Sure they did, a whole lot," replied the farmer.

"Then you want them taken in, I reckon," interrupted the officer, bracing himself, as though he might be ready to sweep the four scouts into his car without further ceremony.

"Taken in?" repeated Mr. Brady. "Well, I should say not. When I agreed with you that these lads had had considerable to do with the fire I meant that only for the grand work they did, my house would have burned to the ground!"

"Then they didn't set the blaze going?" growled the big man. "Who did, then?"

"Two men I engaged yesterday as farm hands; and from what I hear I believe they are the very scoundrels you are looking for this minute," the farmer replied.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEARCHING THE HAY BARN.

"SAY that again, please!" gasped Chief Benchley, as he stared at the farmer, like a man who could hardly believe his ears.

"I said I had reason to believe that the two hands I hired yesterday must be the very rascals you are looking for right now," repeated Mr. Brady.

"Er—describe them, please?" said the man in uniform, as he drew out a bulky notebook, and opened it at a certain place.

"One was very short, a squatty sort of fellow, but enormously strong. When I saw what he could lift I thought I'd run across a good hand, though I own that I didn't just like his face; but at this time of year farmers can't be choosers, 'cause help is mighty scarce."

"Did he have a scar on his right cheek?" asked the pompous chief of police, as he kept his eyes on his notebook.

"That's just what he did have; told me he had been caught once by a reaper, and just escaped with his life!" answered Mr. Brady promptly.

"So. And did you happen to notice his left hand, was the upper joint of his little finger missing?" the officer continued, in a sing-song tone.

"It certainly was," replied the farmer, nodding; "he explained that in the same way; and I agreed with him that he was lucky to lose only so small a piece, when he had the mower catch him, as the horses ran away."

"Settled then; that was Shorty McCabe beyond all doubt," remarked the official. "Now how about his companion? Was he tall?"

"Half again as big a man as the other," replied Mr. Brady.

"Squint with one of his eyes; and talk as if he had his mouth filled with hot mush?" continued Chief Benchley.

"You have described him to a dot," answered the other, quickly.

"Then I have the honor to inform you, sir, that the men who were lately in your employ are the identical criminals we happen to be looking for at this very minute."

"I guessed as much," dryly remarked Mr. Brady; who, it seemed to Elmer, had sized the important official at his true value, which, as Landy afterwards declared, was very much along the line of a "bag of wind."

"Please produce them, and we will see to it that they give you no further worry," remarked the officer.

"I only wish I could, sir; but the fact is, that after being caught robbing the house by one of my family, while my grown son and myself were in the fields, they set fire to things, and then ran off," the farmer replied.

"That is bad," remarked the policeman, sadly. "I had thought you might have tied the rascals up, and that we could relieve you of their care. Can you tell me in what direction they fled, sir?"

"Toward the barns, my daughter says," Mr. Brady replied.

"Evidently with the design of securing horses, and continuing their flight," said the big man in blue, as though these things were only for the practical mind of a man of long experience.

"Hardly that, sir," the farmer observed.

"How do you know?" asked Chief Benchley, frowning at the idea of a mere countryman venturing to differ with him.

"Because they knew in the first place that I only have two horses just now, and both of them were being used by my son and myself out in another field, some distance away from the house. But one of these wide-awake lads has suggested that perhaps they meant to conceal themselves in the haymow, or about the barns somewhere, in the hope that after all the excitement blew over, another chance might open up to search my house for the money they need to make a get-away."

The big man in blue wagged his head as he considered this piece of information.

"Well, now, that might be worth looking into; it isn't such a bad idea for a boy to think up. Perhaps we'd better take a look through the barn, and make sure. Whether we find them there or not, make up your mind the game's nearly up for the rascals. When they get Benchley hot on the trail, they're going to cash in and start for the pen in short order. Lead the way to the barn, then, mister. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't mention it, but I'm Silas Brady. I was just going to get some of the neighbors, and make the search myself when you hove in sight, Mr. Benchley. But of course I'd be only too glad to have you take entire charge, for your long experience in such things will be of great advantage to us," and catching the eye of Elmer just then, Mr. Brady gave him a sly wink.

But the pompous man in blue did not see this. He swelled out a little more, until Landy privately informed Ty that he made him think of a proud pouter pigeon he

had at home, which threatened to burst every time it strutted around, with its lungs filled with air.

As they started off toward the barn the officer made a sweeping motion with his arm that was apparently understood by the three who had come with him in the car, for they immediately headed as if to join him.

The farmer also spoke to quite a number of husky fellows whom he knew as neighbors; so that there was a general exodus from the vicinity of the house toward the out-buildings of the place.

As the word was passed from mouth to mouth the brawny farmers began to show some signs of excitement. One of them picked up a stout cudgel, which he gripped in a way to indicate that he anticipated using the same in case of necessity; seeing which the others started to also arm themselves.

It was quite a formidable force that began to surround the barn and cowsheds.

"Wow!" exclaimed Landy, who had also snatched up a wagon spoke upon which his eye had alighted, and seemed eager for the fray; "countin' the four Fairfield cops, we're just sixteen good and true men. My eye! won't Shorty and Lanky Jim throw up their hands when they see what they're up against!"

"If they get just one look at that Benchley," said Ty in a low tone, "they'll nearly drop dead. Say, just see him strut around, would you? He couldn't put on more frills if he was a major-general, directing the Battle of Gettysburg. This is as good as a circus, fellows, and I wouldn't have missed it for a heap."

"Thame here," chuckled Ted. "And I wath jutht wondering how he'd act if that hard faced little fighter, Thorty, would pop out of a hole and jump him. Thix to one you'd

hear that big gath-bag holler for help like a calf. I know hith breed, boyth."

Elmer did not make any remark; but if that little smile on his face stood for anything it meant that the others voiced his sentiments pretty clearly.

The surrounding of the out-buildings was now complete. Chief Benchley made the round, stationing every man afresh as though he did not want to lose the slightest bit of credit for managing the affair. He was in his glory, and looked as though the chance of a lifetime were now within his grasp.

He had reserved several men to assist him in making the search. Among these, two of his officers and the farmer himself were to be seen. And as the official had scorned to place boys on guard, because of the poor opinion he had of them in general, Elmer and his chums were enabled to trail into the barn after the searching party, an opportunity they did not neglect to avail themselves of.

Twice did the pompous official turn a questioning eye toward them, as though he might be inclined to order them out; but on second thought he changed his mind, and said nothing. As the scouts would have declined to pay any attention to his orders, perhaps after all the Fairfield head of police was wise not to attempt anything of the kind.

The Brady barns were unusually large, even for a big farm. As quite a quantity of hay was stored here, waiting until the market price rose in the winter, extensive space was needed; though there were also three or four immense haystacks in the rear of the buildings, as well as one of straw, left when the threshing machine had passed through, and the oat crop had been attended to during the summer.

"If anybody comes across any sign of the culprits, call out, and the rest of us will hurry to the spot. Just shout

out the words, ' Here they are,' and we will understand," the officer had said, as the party entered the big barn.

Then began a scene of bustle, as men went this way and that, poking about for signs of those who were supposed to be in hiding.

Of course all this could not be done without causing more or less racket; and if the two tramps were close by they must have discovered what was taking place early in the hunt.

Elmer kept his three scout chums with him.

"We'll hunt in a bunch, fellows," he had declared. "The Chief doesn't want us around him, so we'll look in other places. Perhaps we can get trace of the ones we're looking for."

"I just bet on you to figure it out, Elmer," remarked the confident Landy.

"Shucks; Elmer could give that big bluffer all the handicap going, and then beat him out. He don't know beans, that's what," snorted Ty, looking scornfully over to where the important party in uniform was walking about, giving orders in a loud and consequential tone.

"Tell uth what to do, Elmer," said Ted; "and we'll poke into every rat hole in th' old plathe."

"One thing's sure," the patrol leader went on, as he looked thoughtfully about him, "if they made up their minds to hide here, then they must have tunneled under the hay, because that is the best of places for staying concealed."

"I second that motion," declared Ty, nodding his head.

"And so we must keep on the watch for any signs of a hole under the hay," Elmer continued, as he ran his eye along the base of the mow close by.

"Huh! looks to me like hunting for a needle in a haystack!" declared Ty, after they had been industriously at work for several minutes, without any success.

"Only one needle this time; the other's a blunt-headed pin," chuckled Landy.

Ted began to sniff the air.

"Thought I thmelled thmoke," he announced as Elmer looked at him suspiciously.

"Well, considering what has happened here lately," remarked Ty, "seems to me that wouldn't be so very queer. I'm just soaked with it, and expect to smell smoke for a month of Sundays."

"But I thmell new thmoke!" Ted continued, positively.

"He's right, fellows; and I'm of the same opinion," Elmer went on to say.

Landy gave a short whistle.

"Smoke, did you say, Elmer?" he exclaimed. "My stars, boys! what if the hoboes have set fire now to the old barn? Say, what a blaze she would make, with all this hay stored here. Me to let them pigs out of the sty if it happens. It would be a shame to have roast pork when they're only part grown."

"Do you really mean it, Elmer?" asked Ty, apparently appalled by the thought of the terrible consequences that must follow, should the pair of desperate rascals go to extremes.

"It seems to be getting stronger all the while," observed the patrol leader, "and look at Mr. Brady; he is sniffing the air right now, as if he didn't like it any too well. I reckon he's got the same idea I have; which is that the men are in hiding here, and being afraid that they will be found have started a fire to cover their escape. See, Mr.

Brady is telling the Fairfield policemen his suspicions now, and you can see that he's given him a start too."

"What a shame it will be if the barn goes, with all this hay," said Landy.

"Oh, Mr. Brady's got it all insured, I reckon," ventured Ty. "Farmers are smart enough these days to look out for that. But it'll make a high old blaze if it gets started, I tell you, fellows."

"But won't the thilly foolth be thetting the match to their own funeral pyre?" demanded Ted.

"Not by a jugful," chuckled Landy. "Ten to one they fixed all that before; and even made their old tunnel under the hay. But that smoke is sure getting heavier all the time, boys; and look there, ain't that the fire yonder? It is, as sure as you live! Good-by to the old barn, and this fine crop of hay. Say, look at it jump, will you?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAPTURE OF THE TRAMPS.

Elmer saw at a glance that what his comrade had declared was really true. And a loud shout from one of the searching men announced that he too had discovered the fire.

Tremendous excitement seized upon the whole party, for they could readily surmise that this new conflagration was not the result of a smoldering spark, but that it had a meaning all its own. The two desperate hoboes must have started the second blaze with the same idea in view that had urged them to put the match to the farmhouse—to divert attention while they slipped away.

That was what Elmer thought. And when most of the men rushed toward the place where the fire was already burning fiercely amidst the hay, he thought it good policy to turn his attention to another quarter.

It had flashed across his mind just then that as they passed around the barn he had noticed a board off, with the hay sticking out of the hole. And now it came to him what a splendid way of escape that same hole would prove, did a tunnel under the hay lead to it.

The watchers outside had been summoned by the loud cries of those within, and as they came rushing through the wide open doors with the intention of trying to put down the spreading fire, Elmer saw that the very condition which those hunted hoboes must have wanted had been brought about.

Outside, the way to escape was clear, so far as brawny men went. If Lanky Jim and Shorty could only wriggle along under the hay until they arrived at that place where the board was missing, they had an open field before them, and flight meant a chance to reach the shelter of the woods beyond the fields.

"Come with me, and be quick about it, fellows," said Elmer, in his most thrilling tone; at which Landy's big eyes opened wider than customary, ditto his mouth.

The other three trailed along at his heels, wondering what he could have in his mind. When all the men were gathering in the barn, with the idea of trying to fight the fire, it seemed strange that Elmer should lead them outside, and away from the excitement.

But then by this time those fellows understood that the patrol leader never did anything without having some good and substantial reason for it. And they were, as a rule, ready to follow blindly wherever he chose to lead, leaving the asking of questions until a better chance opened up.

Had Doubting George been present, possibly he might have tried to quiz Elmer ere he yielded full obedience; but then even George must learn that one of the first duties of a true scout is to exhibit implicit subjection to authority.

In this fashion then did Elmer lead his three chums around the outside of the big barn. They could hear the shouts of those who were fighting the flames within; but Elmer knew only too well that the chances of the new fire being subdued were small indeed. Hay burns with frightful rapidity; and no buckets were handy at the moment.

Turning, as he drew near the place where the board had been torn from the back of the barn, he made a motion with his finger that seemed to call for silence. The other

fellows almost held their breath with suspense, still in doubt as to what Elmer meant to do; although they began to suspect that he must have conceived an idea looking to the confusion of the incendiaries.

When he pointed straight at the place where some of the new hay was sticking out, Landy's blackened face lighted up with intelligence.

"He means they're expecting to crawl out right here," he whispered in the ear of Ty, who was close beside him.

The other made a suggestive movement with the club he had picked up, and by which action he meant that it would please him very much if only he had the opportunity to bring it down upon the head of Shorty, or his long-legged mate.

Then they all turned their eyes again on Elmer, expecting him to tell just what he wanted them to do. They saw the patrol leader pick up a piece of rope that happened to be lying handy, and fashion a slip-noose with it. During his life up in that big country of the Canadian Northwest, Elmer had seen many things which he would never be apt to forget as long as he lived. And, among others, he had once watched the mounted police capture a half-breed fugitive from justice, fastening his hands together behind his back in a clever way, which possibly he might now have a chance to imitate.

"Here, take this, Ty," he said, in a low tone, as he handed the noosed rope over to the one nearest to him. "When I whip the fellow's arms behind his back, make sure that you get that loop around them, and pull tight! Understand?"

Ty nodded his head vigorously, not daring to trust himself to speech. Things were happening so fast and furious that really he hardly knew whether he might be awake, or else asleep and dreaming them.

Of course both Landy and Ted had also caught the significance of the movement, and were ready to do whatever they were told. Elmer made motions to give them to understand that he wanted them to range up on the other side of the hole in the side of the barn, and await developments, while he and Ty crouched as close to the boards across the way as possible.

Landy was heard to chuckle while this was going on. Perhaps something about the situation reminded the fat boy of other occasions, when he and some of his mates had endeavored to clutch some rabbit as it came darting out of its burrow, after a ferret had alarmed it, or a little dog been let loose in the tunnel. But just now the game was of an entirely different order, and Elmer frowned at Landy's merriment.

Inside the barn the noise was redoubled. Evidently the fire-fighters were having their hands full, with the rapid spread of the blaze. If in the end they managed to control the conflagration, Elmer felt that he would be surprised. According to his mind there was not one chance in ten of such good luck coming to Mr. Brady. He had saved his house, but his barn would very likely have to go.

Elmer had his eyes glued on the projecting wisps of hay now. He fancied that he had detected some little movement to them, though this might be caused by a passing breeze; or some action on the part of the energetic fire-fighters within.

No, as he looked, he distinctly saw the hay move! Then there must be a reason for this. Elmer instantly placed his hand upon the hay, and the sense of feeling telegraphed the truth to his brain. Some object was making a way through the mow, and evidently pushing along a tunnel that had been previously prepared!

He turned and put his finger to his lips, seeing which every one of the wide-awake scouts understood what was meant.

Imagine the strain on their nerves while they waited for the appearance of the first tramp. Would he come along head-first, or might they expect to see a pair of feet thrust out of the opening?

More violently did the hay move. Whatever made the stir, it was certainly drawing closer and closer to the spot. All eyes were glued on the agitated dried grass, and Ty got his loop in readiness for quick work.

Then something was seen pushing out through the hay, which gave way before the energetic attack. Two extra large feet, encased in brogans that looked as though they might have covered many weary miles in their day, came into view; proving that the man must be making a crab-like retreat, keeping his face toward the fire.

Perhaps fortune favored the boys, for had the man projected his head first he might have detected their presence in time to duck in again; though for that matter, with the fire burning briskly beyond, he would find himself beween two evils, and must sooner or later issue forth, or be cremated in the hay barn.

Waiting until the main part of the long-legged tramp had wriggled into view, Elmer made a sudden gesture. The others had been waiting for this, and instantly pounced upon the figure that lay upon the ground.

While Ted and Landy deposited their combined weight on the fellow's back, Elmer on his part hastened to snatch hold of his arms, and whip them behind him almost before the tramp understood what was happening.

Ty was waiting, and the way he slipped that loop over both hands, and tightened it, was worth seeing.

Having made all secure so far as things had gone, the patrol leader now seized hold of the kicking legs, and began to pull. As the others came to his assistance they were hardly two seconds in dragging the tramp out of the hay mow; and thus far at least not the slightest sound had been made calculated to betray the facts to the other rascal.

It was not Elmer's intention to let the fellow see, just yet, at least, that he owed his capture to a parcel of scouts. He might burst out into a tirade, which, while it could do him no particular good, might serve to warn the other fellow, and cause him to change his plans.

Accordingly he motioned to Landy to sit down on him again; and then bending low himself he pressed the end of his pocketknife against the man's neck as he grunted into his ear:

"Keep still, now, unless you want me to press the trigger!"

Satisfied that Landy and Ted could manage the tied tramp, even if he started to kick up a row, which was hardly likely, Elmer once more turned his attention to that opening under the mow. Once again the projecting hay was being violently agitated, and he believed the shorter man must be following close upon his mate.

The programme would have to be repeated, and Elmer only hoped as good success might attend his second effort as had his first.

It would be a big feather in the caps of the scouts could they say that they had effected the capture of the two would-be train wreckers, alone and unaided. But at the moment he was not thinking of such a thing as glory; when it was a stern duty that had been suddenly thrust upon them, and which they must not attempt to evade under

any circumstances, if they wished to be true to the principles of the organization to which they belonged.

Shorty, however, must have managed to change his position in some manner, if so be he had started along the tunnel in the same crab-like method of procedure which his comrade had employed. For the first thing they knew a frowsy head had been thrust out of the hay, and a pair of eyes were blinking up at them.

Elmer was afraid lest the fellow draw back upon seeing what awaited him, just as a tortoise will pull in its head at signs of danger. Accordingly, he was determined not to allow such a thing to happen. True, with the advancing fire Shorty would speedily have to decide which fate he must choose; but that might mean he would yield himself a prisoner to the Fairfield police; and Elmer wanted the Boy Scouts to get all the credit possible.

On this account, then, he pounced on the man, and gripped him by the shoulders. Elmer was himself far from a weakling, and the man happened to be taken very much by surprise; so that before he could collect his wits sufficiently to make any show of defense, he found himself out on the ground, with a couple of energetic young fellows hovering over him.

Ty, not having a second rope handy, had snatched up his club again. When he saw that the shorter rascal was starting to make a move, as though intending to get to his feet, when trouble must have followed, Ty waved the wagon spoke threateningly over his head, as he yelled excitedly:

"Lie down, you, 'less you want me to let her fall! Stretch out and roll over on your face, d'ye hear? Quick, now, keep amovin'! 'Everybody's doin' it,' you know.

Now, Elmer, if you only had another piece of string handy, there's a good chance to snug him up good and tight."

Elmer did not have the cord or the rope; but all the same he was equal to the demands of the occasion. He snatched his big red bandana handkerchief from around his neck. He had seen such useful articles serve strange purposes before; and why should this one not take the place of a rope?

So he whipped it quickly around the thick wrists of the man, almost before the fellow could get it through his head what had happened.

"Now, let's pull them farther away from here, because the barn's going to be a hot place pretty soon," Elmer remarked.

Seizing hold, two to each prisoner, the boys succeeded in dragging them some little distance off. Meanwhile some one had noticed what they were doing, and presently the Fairfield Police head came running out of the barn, rubbing his smarting eyes, and, coming upon the little party, stopped to stare in astonishment.

CHAPTER XVI.

GOOD-BY TO THE SWEETWATER.

"WHAT are you doing to those fellows, boys?" demanded the champion of law and order; from which remark it was plain to be seen that the smoke had affected the eyes of the police officer to such an extent that he had failed to recognize the culprits, and possibly believed the boys were only carrying on high among themselves, as boys over in his town frequently did, to the unhappiness of the constables.

"We just took a notion to prevent them from escaping, sir," remarked Elmer. "And if you think you can hold them, we're willing to turn them over into your charge, in the presence of Mr. Brady here and the others."

A group began to cluster around them, most of the men rubbing their smarting eyes. Already did they realize the uselessness of trying to put up a fight against the flames that were spreading resistlessly amid the hay.

"'Well, I declare if it ain't the two hands that worked for me, and then tried to rob my house, setting it on fire as they ran away!" declared Mr. Brady, as he got a good look at the prostrate men.

"Do you mean to say these are the fugitives I have been chasing, the desperate yeggmen named Shorty McCabe and Lanky Jim Smith?" cried the police head.

"That's just who they are, sir," replied Elmer.

"But where did you find them?" demanded the other, hardly willing to believe the plain evidence of his eyes and ears.

"As soon as I knew they had set fire to the hay I guessed it was only meant to draw attention to that quarter while they slipped away. I've seen that game played more than once out West, sir," Elmer remarked, modestly.

"And it was a fact, was it; they did try to steal off?" questioned the other.

"We found a place where there was a board off the barn, and Elmer, he expected that was the way they'd come out," said Ty, breaking in; for he just wanted this consequential personage to understand that he did not know so very much after all, in spite of his splendid uniform and that wonderful strut.

"Which same they did, all right," spoke up Landy, "and then, you see, we just sat on 'em. Reckon the long feller must 'a' thought a mountain had caved in when I dropped on his back."

"Will you take charge of the prisoners, Mr. Benchley?" asked Elmer.

"That's what we're here for, young fellow; though, as a rule we don't much fancy boys interfering with the pursuit of justice," answered the other, who did not look any too happy over the way things had turned out.

Elmer, on his part, was fully satisfied Mr. Brady and a number of the others had crowded around, astonished at the turn matters had taken, and staring at the two prisoners. They would be in a position to prove, should it be necessary at any time in the future, that the scouts had indeed effected the capture of the hunted train wreckers, without any assistance from the police.

And as for Shorty and Lanky Jim, it would not be polite to tell what they thought and said when they discovered that their captors were merely four half-grown boys. Perhaps on first seeing the khaki trousers and leggings of the

scouts they may have labored under the impression that the militia had been called out to run them down; and this would account for the meekness shown all along.

The barn was now in the grasp of the fire. They could see the billows of flame leaping upward; and a dense black smoke began to rise.

"This is tough luck, Mr. Brady," said Landy, after the officers had fastened some shining steel ornaments to the wrists of their prisoners, and led them over to the waiting car. "After saving your house by a close shave, it's hard to have your barn and hay go up in smoke."

But the farmer did not seem to be very deeply concerned.

"Barn's insured; and it's an old one at that," he remarked, with a half smile; "and as luck would have it, I sold all the hay in there just last week, for cash! The man who bought it took out insurance, I believe. But you boys have certainly covered yourselves with a lot of glory this morning. First, saving my house, and then capturing those tough characters. I consider that I'm getting off mighty cheap. Hope some of you fellows will take a notion to camp up this way more times than a few. It pays to have Boy Scouts around. That's been my experience, anyhow."

"Well, how about milk, Mr. Brady?" asked Elmer. "We brought that tin bucket along, but it's mixed up with all the rest now. Suppose we could get one of your women folks to go to the milk house with all this excitement on?"

"Why, any one of 'em would be only too proud to do such a little thing for the brave boys who worked so hard to save a roof over their heads. And don't think, young fellow," the farmer added, turning on the confused Ty, suddenly, "that we don't appreciate what you did, just because it turned out to be a pup instead of a baby. That

was as bold a thing as ever I saw done. If I had any boys about your age, I'd make sure that they joined the scout movement before they were a week older. Seems like it cultivates the best there is in a lad."

All of the boys glowed with pleasure at hearing these hearty words.

"Thank you, Mr. Brady," said Elmer. "It sure is a satisfaction to know that you look at things that way. And we feel repaid for all we've done, don't we, boys?"

"It's only been a pleasure to play coon for you, Mr. Brady," grinned Landy.

"And I'm glad it was only a dog instead of a real baby," declared Ty, stoutly; "'cause, you see, something might have happened to hitch my plans, and think what a terrible thing would have happened then."

"Come with me, boys, and I'll see that you get milk; yes, cream if you'd prefer it. It's lucky that those haystacks happen to be as far off as they are, and the wind is blowing away from them; because, you see, I kept that part of the crop. Intended making a lot of repairs to the barn after it was empty. Now I'll take the insurance money, add some more to it, and build me a better place three times over."

"There go Shorty and Jim," announced Landy, as the car started off for the near-by public road.

"And they look at us as if they could eat us alive," commented Ty.

"I gueth thome of uth would rather thtick in their throath," remarked Ted, gloomily.

"What ails you, Ted?" asked Elmer, as they trailed along after Mr. Brady. "You don't look like you were altogether happy."

"I know," announced Landy, a little maliciously. "He

just wanted to get a chance to cut off a few arms and legs, and such things as go with a battle. I could see it in his eyes when it looked like we were going to have a real rumpus with them train wreckers. And it all turned out so easy, Ted is disgusted. Ain't it so, Ted?"

The budding surgeon of the troop shrugged his shoulders and grunted the one word: "Rotten!"

And those boys, who knew Ted so well, could understand something of the wild ambition that must have fired his soul when he figured that one or more persons must surely be seriously hurt, when the police came in contact with the two house burners. But it had passed off, and now the car containing prisoners and captors had gone, without even one little blow having been struck on either side.

"What's the sense of knowing how to bind up wounds, and do all that sort of stunts, when nothing ever happens; that's what Ted is saying to himself," Landy remarked, chuckling as he spoke, for he did dearly love to poke fun at others.

"If you keep on," said Ted, with a dark look, "there'll be a subject forthcoming in double-quick order. But somebody'll have to sweep you up with a broom first before I can do anything with you."

So Landy subsided, even though of course he knew that Ted was only "talking through his hat," as he expressed it, and for effect.

Having procured the needed milk, the four boys returned to camp. Loud were the lamentations of George and Adam when they learned what a great event they had missed by not accompanying the others to the Brady home. At first George, true to his nature, declined to believe a word of it; but when he and Adam, urged on by curiosity to forget whatever cause they had had for remaining in camp, hur-

ried over to the scene of excitement, they heard the story from numerous lips; so that the last doubt was laid.

The balance of the day was spent in resting up, for all of them were sore from their unusual exertions, however much they might try to hide the fact. Of course a plunge in the river had soon removed all the smoke stains, and refreshed them at the same time.

"It's lucky we had on our oldest trousers and leggings," remarked Elmer, when they came to examine into the condition of things. "What with water slopping over the pails, and the smoke and cinders, these are a sight right now. But it'll wash out, fellows, and that's something our record made this day will never do."

"Only one thing I'm sorry about," remarked Landy.

"What'th that? Anything to do with the way Ty here thailed into that burning crib, and thnatched out the poor little innothent lamb, Bennie?" asked Ted.

"No. What I meant was that I forgot to take Lil Artha's camera along when we started for the farmhouse, because I never thought we'd have anything happen to us worth remembering. Just think, boys, if I had snapped off half a dozen views of that business, wouldn't they deserve a frame in our meeting room?"

"Just what they would," affirmed Landy. "I'd give anything if I had one to show my folks what a hero their son and heir had grown to be. But then," he added, sighing, "they wouldn't have known me with all that black on my face."

"Come off!" cried George. "Anybody'd know you by your elegant figure; I could tell you a mile away, with one eye shut."

"Oh, thank you, George!" said Landy effusively, just as though he really believed his cousin meant it. "I always

knew you were a good chap, and could appreciate true merit, no matter where found. It's worth something to hear such splendid words of praise from one of your own family. I'll treasure them for a long while, sure."

"Don't believe a word of it," remarked George, true to his colors, and a doubter from the word "go."

Nothing more out of the way happened to the scouts while they were in that snug camp on the Sweetwater. We saw them first on that same stream, and it seems only right that we should take our last glimpse of some of our friends while they are still in camp.

When on the morrow they would start to wend their way homeward, it would doubtless be with many regrets, for they had certainly had a great time of it, all told. As school duties began, the Hickory Ridge Troop of Boy Scouts would not find so many opportunities for outings; but the ties that had bound them together all summer still held good; and no matter what the sport that engaged their attention, these lads who had signed the roster under Roderic Garrabrant's guidance were bound to be drawn together with the strong affection of those who have the same goal in sight, and look upon one another as "comrades tried and true."

We shall hope to again meet with Elmer and his chums ere long, and in new fields follow the fortunes of those good fellows who formed the several patrols of the Hickory Ridge troop.

THE END.

ADDENDA

BOY SCOUT NATURE LORE

BOY SCOUT NATURE LORE TO BE FOUND IN THE HICKORY RIDGE BOY SCOUT SERIES.

Wild Animals of the United States
Tracking } in Number I.

THE CAMPFIRES OF THE WOLF PATROL.

Trees and Wild Flowers of the United States in Number II.

WOODCRAFT, OR HOW A PATROL LEADER MADE GOOD.

Reptiles of the United States in Number III.

PATHFINDER, OR THE MISSING TENDERFOOT.

Fishes of the United States in Number IV.

FAST NINE, OR A CHALLENGE FROM FAIRFIELD.

Insects of the United States in Number V.

GREAT HIKE, OR THE PRIDE OF THE KHAKI TROOP.

Birds of the United States in Number VI.

ENDURANCE TEST, OR HOW CLEAR GRIT WON THE DAY.

THE BIRDS OF THE UNITED STATES

The birds constitute a large group of the animal kingdom. Their chief distinguishing feature is their covering of feathers. Another characteristic is the production of their young enclosed in eggs.

The Vultures.

The name "vulture" is applied to a family of birds of prey. The bill of the vulture is large and very strong; the head and neck are almost naked, being very lightly

TURKEY BUZZARD.

sprinkled with down. It is a carrion-devouring bird and does not attack living animals. It displays marvelous quickness in discovering a dead body. Vultures are generally

protected in the countries where they are found because of their value in clearing away the putrid animal matter which would otherwise be injurious as well as disagreeable. The American vultures sometimes reach a large size and are very powerful in flight.

The Turkey Buzzard and Carrion Crow, both of which are vultures, are common in the temperate parts of America. The Carrion Crow is found as far North as Carolina. The Turkey Buzzard is not a true buzzard and is wrongly so called.

The Eagle.

Eagles are large and powerful birds. The flight of this magnificent bird is very beautiful and imposing, but its gait when on land is rather awkward. Its food is usually smaller birds and quadrupeds such as hares, rabbits, etc., but it does not hesitate to carry off young lambs or sometimes to destroy sickly sheep. It generally hunts in pairs, one eagle watching at some height while the other courses along the ground and scares the game from the bushes. It lays two eggs of a yellowish-white color with brownish spots on a nest composed of a great mass of sticks, brush and grass. The young are fledged about the end of July. While the young are in the nest it is very dangerous to approach it as the eagles are then extremely fierce and daring. Some instances have been related of children that have been carried off by an eagle, but these stories are very doubtful. Eagles have certainly been known to pounce upon children and carry them a little way, but there are no true accounts of children having been actually taken to the eagles' nest, although there are many stories founded on such a supposition. The beak of the eagle is curved from the face, having a sharp point. Its wings are long and large. They catch and kill their own prey, but unlike the vultures will not eat carrion. The eagle which is found in North America is usually the golden eagle, and inhabits the Western States. The Indians called it "the War Eagle." Its feathers are dark brown.

AMERICAN BALD EAGLE.

The Buzzards.

The family of Buzzards are distinguished by their short beaks, large rounded wings and squared tails. They live on small animals, reptiles and various insects.

The Common Buzzard, when searching for food, rests upon some high branch, keeping a keen watch on the ground, and waiting patiently until some small animal

COMMON BUZZARD.

makes its appearance or some bit of carrion is scented. Its length is from twenty to twenty-two inches. In flight it is rather slow and heavy. The bird popularly known as a Hen Hawk is a buzzard.

The Falcons.

The falcons are also birds of prey. Hawks are members of this family. The Peregrine Falcon is an inhabitant of most parts of Europe, Asia, South America and North America. It builds its nest on cliffs and lays from two to four eggs which are spotted with dark red. It preys on other birds; its strength and swiftness are very great, enabling it to strike down its prey with great ease; indeed, it has been known to disable five partridges in succession. It changes the color of its plumage several times before it arrives at full maturity. Its length is from fifteen to eighteen inches.

The Sparrow Hawk feeds on mice, ground squirrels, insects, small birds. It displays great pertinacity in pursuit of its prey which it will chase for a long while, skimming along a few feet above the ground. When taken young it is easily tamed and will then associate with the most incongruous companions. Its length is from twelve to fifteen feet. It builds upon lofty trees.

The Owls.

The owls are nocturnal birds, pursuing their prey by night and sleeping by day. They have a large round head with enormous eyes looking forward. Many species possess two feathery tufts placed on the head greatly resembling horns. In order to enable them to see their prey their eyes are enormously large, capable of taking in every ray of light. To protect them from the cold they are furnished with a dense covering of downy feathers which also prevents the movements of the wing from being heard. The beak is short and horny, but very strong. They prey on small animals, fish, insects, reptiles. The cry of the owl is very peculiar and weird. This, coupled with their strange appearance, has made them objects of superstition. The ancients adopted them as symbols of wisdom. The

owls of North America that are the best known are the Horned Owl, the Grayish-barred Owl and the Mottled Owl.

The Snowy Owl also is found in North America; it is a good fisher, snatching its prey from the water by a sudden grasp of the foot; it also preys on small animals, chasing

AN OWL.

and striking at them with its foot. It makes its nest on the ground and lays three or four white eggs. Its length is from twenty-two to twenty-seven inches. It extends its wings four feet. There are some species of owl found in America that burrow, living in the same hole with prairie dogs, making their nest in the mouth of the prairie dog's burrow.

Cousins to the owls are the Nightjars, for example, the night hawk and whip-poor-will. They feed on moths and insects which they catch as they fly. Their eggs are laid on the ground without a nest.

The Swallows.

Swallows are remarkable for their great power of wing, their wide mouths, their short legs and weak feet. Their wing feathers are long, stiff and pointed, and their tails are long and forked. Nine species of swallow are found north of Mexico. They spend most of their time on the wing and live almost entirely upon insects which they capture as they fly; their large mouths particularly adapt them for this manner of feeding. They nest frequently in colonies; they migrate in large flocks and can often be seen in great quantities at roosting places. They show skill in the construction of their nests. The purple martin belongs to this family; it is common in the South but rare in the Northern States. The tree swallow builds its nest of grasses and feathers in the hollow of a tree. The bank swallow nests in a sand-bank.

The Swifts.

The swifts are often confused with swallows owing to the similarity of their flight and the manner in which they feed. A Chimney Swift, commonly but erroneously called the Chimney Swallow, in construction is more like the humming-bird than the swallow; they nest in chimneys about ten feet from the top.

The Kingfisher.

These birds are chiefly tropical, the Belted Kingfisher being the only one of the family that is found north of

Texas. They feed on fishes and frequent the land near the water and nest in holes which they make in a bank.

KINGFISHER.

They perch on some limb overhanging the water and watchfully wait for their dinner.

The Humming-bird.

Eighteen species of these have been found in the United States, but only one of these is found east of the Mississippi. They feed on insects and also on the juices of flowers. The humming-bird has no song, but the beauty of its plumage

HUMMING-BIRD.

makes up for this deficiency. It darts through the air almost as quickly as thought; now it is within a yard of your path—in an instant gone—now it flutters from flower to flower to sip the dew—it is now a ruby—now a topaz—now an emerald—now burnished gold. Its tongue is almost like that of the woodpecker, being curled around the head under the skin, and is thus capable of being darted to a considerable distance; like many other little creatures, it is remarkable for its assurance and impudence; it is

easily tamed for that very reason and has been known to domesticate itself in an hour from the time it is captured, and often when released has returned again to partake of the dainties which it has tasted during its captivity. It seems to have no fear and will attack any bird, irrespective of size. The nest of the humming-bird is as dainty as the bird iself.

The Wrens.

The American House Wren is larger than the European wren, being about five inches long. It is of a reddish-brown color. The nest of the wren is built in any convenient cranny: an ivy-covered tree, the thatch of a barn or a warm scarecrow are all used by this featherless little bird. It is a good fighter and will attack bluebirds and swallows. The nest is usually of an oval shape, always covered on the outside with some material resembling the color of the objects around it, such as green moss, if built among ivy, or brown lichen, if built on a rock or in the fork of a withered branch. The eggs are six or eight in number —white, specked with reddish-brown.

The Carolina Wren frequents the undergrowth in thickets; he is the most nervously active of all the wrens.

The Bewick's Wren is often found in the barnyard.

The Winter Wren builds its nest usually in the tree-roots and heaps of brush.

The Marsh Wrens build their nests of a globular shape with the entrance at the side, either attached to weeds or tall grass, near or on the ground.

The Warblers.

This is a very large family; they feed almost entirely upon insects. They are the first to leave upon the approach of winter and the last to come in the spring. They migrate at night and thousands are killed annually by dashing against lighthouses.

The black and white warbler is streaked with black and white and can be readily identified; it can be often seen creeping under branches in search of its insect food.

The yellow warbler. What boy has not seen a "wild canary"? It likes to inspect the gardens and shrubbery around our houses, and consequently may be frequently noticed. There are a great many more in this numerous family.

The Thrushes.

This is another large bird family. In it are the bluebird and the friendly robin; their song is very sweet.

The wood thrush is less shy than the veery or hermit thrush. It can be distinguished from the others by its larger size and its ruddy color and the large black spots covering its underparts. The veery's upper parts are cinnamon color; its dress is finely marked and its sides almost white; it inhabits the dense woods and does not frequent the habitation of man as does the wood thrush.

The Hermit Thrush is distinguished by its red tail, which is much brighter in color than its back; it comes early in the spring and lingers long in the autumn.

There are probably few boys who do not know a robin when they see one, nor does the bluebird need to be introduced.

The Blackbirds and Orioles.

The Red-winged Blackbird has bright scarlet shoulders; the rest of the feathers are mainly black; they frequent marshes.

Orchard Orioles are to be found in the orchards, the elms, the maples, and other trees of our lawns. This bird is remarkable for the complete change he makes in his plumage, from a dull yellow to a deep orange and black, the bird in the summer presenting an entirely different aspect from

that in the winter. He builds his nest very near the end of a tall limb where it will swing in the wind like a hammock.

The Bobolink is another one of this family that changes its clothes each year. It goes North as the bobolink and goes South as the reedbird or ricebird.

The Purple Grackle comes to us early in the spring; its plumage is an iridescent purplish and greenish black.

The Cowbirds build no nests; they deposit their eggs in the nests of smaller birds. These eggs are hatched with the others in the nest and the young birds clamor constantly for food and often starve or crowd out the rightful bird babies.

The Thrashers, Mocking-birds, etc.,

frequent the borders or the edges of the woods and have considerable singing ability; possibly the best known of this family is the catbird, so called because his most familiar cry is similar to the plaintive "meow" of the cat. Although very few seem to know it, the catbird is also a fine songster.

The mocking-bird is a great singer, sometimes singing throughout a particularly bright moonlight night as well as all day long. While sitting on its eggs it is an exceedingly courageous bird, attacking without discrimination men, dogs, or any animal that may approach too near the nest. The black snake is the special object of its vengeance. The snake, which has perhaps just arrived at the vicinity of the nest, and is contemplating a pleasant breakfast on the young or eggs, is violently attacked by the enraged mocking-bird, which, by repeated blows on the head, generally destroys its enemy, and then, mounting on a bush, pours forth a triumphant song of victory. The nest is made generally in a bush or fruit tree, frequently close to houses, as the bird is protected by the inhabitants. The mocking-bird is often kept tame, in which case, so far from its imi-

tative powers showing any decrease, the variety of domestic sounds heard about the house is often very perplexing.

MOCKING-BIRD.

The thrasher is also a vocalist of some quality; he likes to sit where he can be seen when he is singing, generally high up in the tree.

The Flycatchers.

The flycatchers are songless; they are found all over the United States. They remain on their perch, waiting for a passing insect; when their prey is within sight they dart after it and then return to their station.

The kingbird is grayish in color and bears a crest which, when raised, reveals reddish feathers. He perches quietly at his station, but is alert to every movement near him, and rarely does a passing insect escape his keen eye.

The phœbe is very fond of building its nest under an old

bridge. His call is a monotonous, plaintive reiteration. It sounds as though he were saying, " phœbe "; hence his name.

Very common flycatchers are the Arcadian Flycatcher, the Wood Peewee and the Least Flycatcher; the latter being called the Least Flycatcher on account of its being the smallest in size.

The Shrikes.

The color of this bird is gray, black and white. It causes fright at once among sparrows, on which it preys as well as upon mice and insects. He has a characteristic flight, flying steadily and in a straight line close to the ground, flapping his wings. When he gets near his destination he reaches it by a sudden upward movement. The shrikes are often called " butcher birds "; they well deserve their name; they transfix their prey upon a thorn preparatory to devouring it, having darted on it from some place of concealment after the same manner as the flycatchers.

The Crows and Jays.

It will probably surprise you to know that the gaily colored blue jay belongs to the same family as the dusky crow. All of this family are great feeders, taking fruits, seeds, insects, eggs and refuse; all of them possess great intelligence. The blue jay seems to take positive pleasure in teasing other birds; he is noisy and reckless; he nests usually in the crotch of a tree from ten to twenty feet high.

The crow's harsh voice, large size and black plumage make this bird well known. Every boy who lives in the country knows how fond the crow is of corn, and who has not seen the scarecrows flapping their empty sleeves in the winds of the cornfield.

The Finches and Sparrows.

This is the largest bird family. They possess stout bills fitted to crush the seeds on which they feed. The House, or English sparrow, was first introduced into the United States in 1851. The Crossbill derives its name from having the tips of its bill crossed. They frequent pine forests

BLUE JAY.

and the structure of their bills helps them in forcing the cones open to get at the seeds within.

The Goldfinches are canary-yellow and black; they travel usually in small flocks; in song they become at times so ecstatic that it seems as if they would burst their little bodies.

The Junco is a small, plump bird. When the summer birds have left for the South the Junco comes from the North.

The Cardinal is one of the gayest of our feathered friends; its plumage is a rosy-red with a little black patch at the throat and the crest; it nests in bushes, the nest being composed of twigs, rootlets and lined with grasses.

The Indigo Bunting is blue as his name. You will find him in old pastures among bushes and clearings. The female of this bird is like a sparrow in marking, except for the tinge of blue which you may discover in her plumage.

The Tanagers

are closely related to the finches; all of them have pretty clothes, especially the Scarlet Tanager, who is bright scarlet with black wings and tail. It is well worth a day's tramp to see one.

The Waxwings.

The Cedar Waxwings arrive late in the spring. They have a black line which runs through the eye; their upper parts are brown, their head is greenish, their tails gray. You will often find them among fruit and shady trees; they like old orchards where they hunt for cankerworms. They have red spots on their wings that look like drops of sealing-wax.

The Vireos.

Small insect-eating birds; they do not catch their prey on the wing as do the flycatchers, but search for their food on bark and leaves; they are pleasant songsters and their nests are neat and well-rounded, suspended from the fork of a branch.

The Woodpeckers.

The claw of the woodpecker is constructed of two toes forward and two toes backward, which assist them in climbing the tree-trunks; their tail feathers are pointed

WOODPECKERS.

and stiff and serve as a prop; the bill is adapted for chiseling out the homes of grubs, insects, etc., in the bark.

The Downy Woodpecker. Its upper parts are black, scarlet band on the neck, the middle of the back is white, while the wing feathers are specked with white. You can often see him in an orchard or in the trees on the lawn, picking out the grubs as he climbs the tree-trunks and branches.

The Sapsucker has a scarlet cap; its back is black and yellow, tail black; it feeds largely on tree juices.

Red-headed Woodpecker. Head, neck, throat and principal parts red; back black and white; nests generally in a dead tree.

The Flicker. The top of the head gray; red band across back of the neck; back brownish with black bars; they are frequently called "high-holes."

The Pigeons and Doves.

The passenger pigeon is now practically extinct. Captain Bendire, writing twenty years ago, says: "It looks now as if their total extermination might be accomplished within the present century. The only thing which retards their complete extinction is that it no longer pays to net these birds, they being too scarce for this now, at least in the more settled portions of the country, and also, perhaps, that from constant and unremitting prosecution on their breeding-grounds they have changed their habits somewhat, the majority no longer breeding in colonies, but scattering all over the country and breeding in isolated pairs." They used to be seen in enormous flocks, which, as they migrated, really hid the sun, destroyed forests miles wide, breaking down branches with their weight and wasting the crops far and wide. This bird moves with extraordinary speed and goes enormous distances. Many have been killed in New York State with their crops full of rice that they must have eaten in Georgia. That means that they flew three hundred miles in six hours. In 1813, Audubon says the air was literally filled with pigeons, and

the midday sun darkened as in an eclipse, and the flocks flew over him in countless numbers for three whole days.

The Mourning Dove is similar to the Passenger Pigeon, but not as large.

Grouse.

The Grouse are as a rule ground birds and trust to their ability to hide to escape detection, their color being such as to make them difficult to detect against a background of dead leaves. The Ruffed Grouse can easily be detected by the drumming sound which it makes. This drumming begins gradually and gradually dies away. The sound is made by the male bird beating its wings in the air. The young birds run about like small chickens. They feed on insects, berries and seeds.

Quail.

Who has not heard the quail call across the fields "bob-white, poor bobwhite"? They like the fields of corn in the fall; in the winter they journey to the deep woods; like the grouse, they rely upon their coloration for protection and will only take flight as a last resort.

The Plovers.

In habit they are like the snipes; but their tails are shorter and thicker. The Golden Plover may be found in marshes and sand-flats; they can run very rapidly; they may be seen as the tide goes out feeding on sand-flats or sand-bars. After running a few yards they stop suddenly and seem to take their bearings. It is well known by its plaintive cry and the stratagems it employs to decoy intruders away from its nest, or rather eggs.

The Killdeer is so called on account of the cry which it utters; it resembles "kill-dee, kill-dee." It is found usually in flocks and nests on the ground in a hollow.

The Cranes

frequent marshes and are fond of frogs, field mice, snakes, etc. They have a loud cry. When in flight the neck is not bent like the Heron's. They nest on the ground.

The Herons and Bitterns.

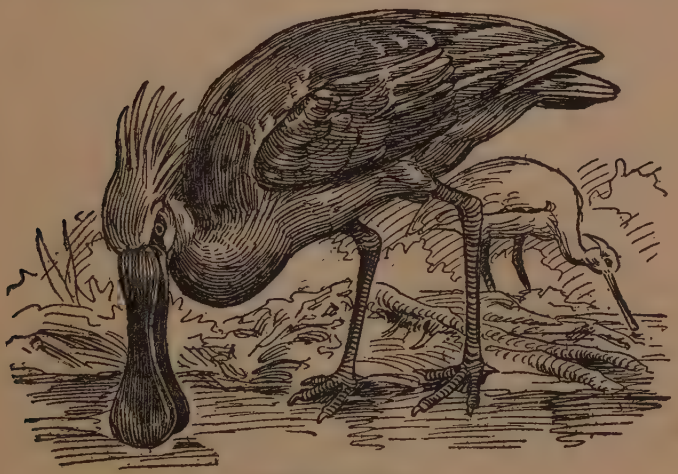
The Herons nest in flocks; the bitterns are not as sociable. The latter inhabit grassy marshes, while Herons like the

HERON.

shores of lakes and rivers. The Herons fly with their neck bent in between their shoulders. The American Bittern lives in large grassy meadows; it makes a peculiar booming sound which can be heard for a long distance. The Great White Heron is found along the Gulf of Mexico and in Florida. The Great Blue Heron is found further north; its nest is usually in tall trees and is made up of sticks and twigs. The Egrets belong to this family.

The Spoonbills.

The Roseate Spoonbill is found only in the very Southern parts of the United States and in small quantities; their bill is large and flat, shaped at the end like a large spoon.



THE SPOONBILL.

The Ibises.

The Ibises find their food on mud-flats along the shores of lakes and rivers. It consists of frogs, small fish, etc.

The Snipes and Sandpipers.

The birds are also found near the water; they have long bills which they force into the mud in search of their food.

The Wilson Snipe nests in meadows and swamps. It builds its nest on the ground and is a game bird popular with the sportsman. The Snipe in its habits much resembles the Woodcock; its flight is very singular, rendering it a difficult mark.

The American Woodcock.

The presence of Woodcock can always be determined by the holes which they make in the earth in search of worms; these are known as woodcock borings. When the bird is found near its nest or young birds it will feign an injury and will endeavor in this way to lead you away from them. The Woodcock frequents dense thickets during the day and at night it leaves for swamps and meadows in search of worms and insects.

Avocets and Stilts.

Called "The Wading Snipe"; they wade in shallow water and can swim when necessary. The bill of this bird is curved like that of the Curlew, but the curve is upward instead of downward.

The Rails, Gallinules and Coots.

The Rails live in marshes. The Gallinules live on marshy banks of rivers, lakes, etc. The Coots are still more aquatic, and are very noisy; all of this family lay their eggs on the ground.

The Flamingoes.

The Flamingoes formerly visited Southern Florida every winter. Now their appearance is rare. The singularly

shaped beak of this splendid bird is peculiarly adapted to its long and flexible neck. When the bird wishes to feed it merely stoops its head into the water; the upper

FLAMINGOES.

mandible is then lowest and is well fitted to receive the nutritive substances which are entangled in a filter placed on the edges of the beak.

The color of its plumage is a deep brilliant scarlet, except the quill feathers, which are black. When a number of these birds stand ranged in a line, according to their custom, they present the appearance of a small and well-drilled body of soldiers.

The Swans.

Wild Swans are now rare birds in the United States. They feed as they swim by putting their long necks and heads under the water. They swim with great rapidity.

SWAN.

Geese.

Watch the skies in the spring and when you see a V-shaped flock of birds flying northward, the wild geese are flying. It is said that the apex of the V is always an old gander. They feed on vegetable matter, both in the water and on shore.

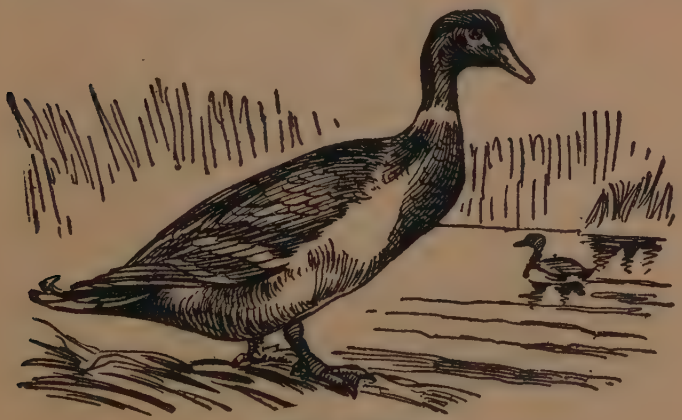
The White-fronted Goose is common in the Mississippi Valley and on the Pacific Coast.

The Canada Goose travels many thousand miles each year in its migrations.

Geese nest on the ground, the nest being made of grasses and twigs and thickly lined with down.

Ducks.

The Mallard is the origin of our domestic bird, and is widely spread over the northern parts of Europe, Asia



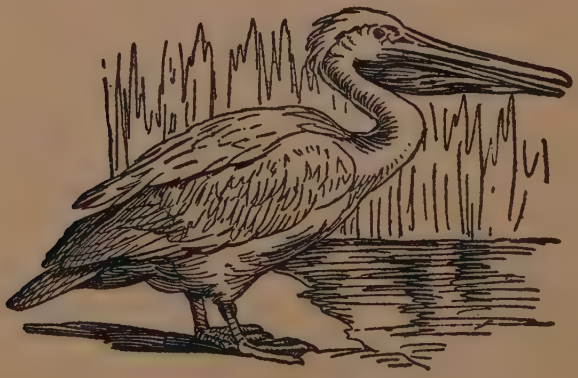
WILD DUCK.

and America. In the winter it migrates in countless flocks to the warmer States.

The Black Duck is sometimes called the Black Mallard. The Red-head Duck along the Atlantic Coast feeds in salt water. The Canvasback is in great demand on account of the superior quality of its flesh as food. Both the Red-head and Canvasback are fond of feeding on wild celery, and it is said that it is this that gives their flesh the fine flavor.

The Pelicans.

These birds nest in colonies. Their flight is strong. The White Pelican and the Brown Pelican are found in Florida.



PELICAN.

It is a very conspicuous bird, its singular membranous pouch offering a distinction perfectly unmistakable. The pouch, when distended, holds two gallons of water, but the bird has the power of contracting it so that it can scarcely be discerned.

The pouch serves as a net in which to scoop up the fish on which the Pelican feeds.

Another most important use of the pouch is to convey food to the young. The parent Pelican presses the pouch

against its breast, in order to enable the young to obtain the fish, which action in all probability gave rise to the fable of the Pelican feeding its own blood. Although web-footed, it can perch on trees, although it prefers sitting on rocks.

The Cormorants.

Cormorants like the sea, but sometimes may be seen inland. They, too, are colony birds. Their nests are made of sticks and seaweed.

CORMORANT.

The Cormorant is exceedingly voracious, and devours an almost incredible amount of fish. It is an excellent diver, and chases the fish actually under the water, seldom if ever returning without having secured its prey. Like the otter, when engaged in chase, it occasionally rises to take breath, and then resumes the pursuit with renewed vigor. It has the power of perching on trees, an accomplishment which we should hardly suspect a web-footed bird of possessing.

The Cormorant is easily tamed, and its fishing propensities can be turned to good account. The Chinese, at the present day, employ a kind of Cormorant for that purpose, having previously placed a ring round the bird's neck to prevent it from swallowing the fish. Its length is about three feet.

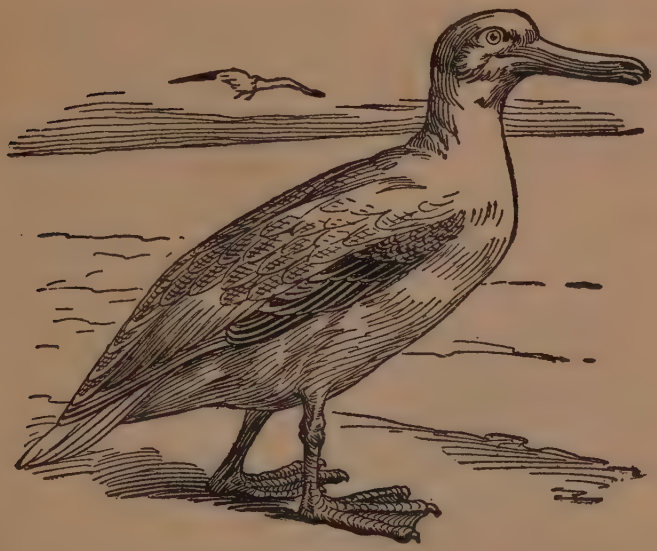
The Petrels.

The Stormy Petrel is, under the name of Mother Carey's Chicken, the terror of the sailor, who always considers the bird as the precursor of a storm. It is the smallest of the web-footed birds. Few storms are violent enough to keep this curious little bird from wandering over the waves in search of the food that the disturbed water casts to the surface.

The Albatrosses.

The Albatrosses are relatives of the Petrels, but much larger birds.

The Wandering Albatross, the largest of the genus, is a well-known bird in the southern seas, following ships for many miles. The flight of this bird is peculiarly majestic. Its extreme length of wing prevents it from rising at once from the ground, but when once launched into the air it seems to float and direct its course without effort.



ALBATROSS.

The Terns.

The Terns, or Sea Swallows, are possessed of great power and endurance of flight, their long forked tails and pointed wings indicating strength and swiftness.

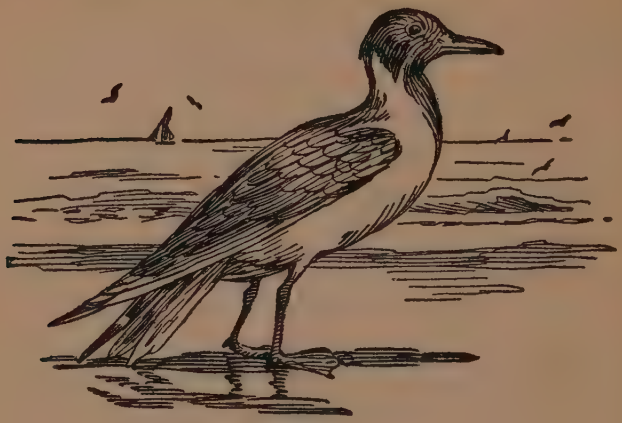
It preys on fish, which it snatches from the surface with unerring aim as it skims over the waves with astonishing velocity.

They inhabit the seashore and, unlike gulls, make distant journeys from the coast.

The Gulls.

The Gulls are larger birds than the Terns. As the vultures are the scavengers of the land, these birds are

the scavengers of the sea. They are frequently seen at great distance from land, resting on the water. Their nests are found in colonies.



GULL.

Puffins.

The Puffin is an excellent diver, plunging fearlessly from a lofty cliff into the sea, and speedily returning with its beak full of fish, which are secured by their heads, and lie in a row along the bill of the Puffin, forming a kind of piscatorial fringe. Its enormous and sharp-edged bill renders it a formidable antagonist to intruders. It is often called the "Sea Parrot."

Loons.

Inhabit fresh water lakes during the summer and the sea during the winter. They can swim considerable distances under water. Their nest is near the shore.

Grebes.

The foot of the Grebes is not webbed like that of most water birds, but each toe is separated and flattened, so as to serve as a separate paddle.

Common Red Birds.

Scarlet Tanager.
Cardinal.
Rose-breasted Grossbeak.
Redstart.

Common Blue Birds.

Blue Jay.
Bluebird.

Common Yellow and Orange Birds.

Yellow Warbler.
Flicker.
Baltimore Oriole.

Common Black Birds.

Crow.
Purple Grackle.
Red-winged Blackbird.
Cowbird.

Common Black and White Birds.

Black and White Warbler.
Bobolink.
Downy Woodpecker.

Common Brown Birds

Thrushes.
Sparrows.

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